DELHI—CHUNGKING

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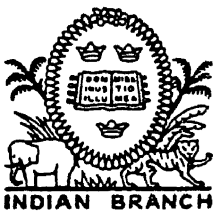
A Travel Diary

by

K. P. S. MENON
Indian Political Service

Foreword by

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU



GEOFFREY CUMBERLEGE
XFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press, Amen House, London, E.C. 4
EDINBURGH GLASGOW NEW YORK TORONTO MELBOURNE
WELLINGTON BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS CAPE TOWN
Geoffrey Cumberlege, Publisher to the University

First published, August 1947

PRINTED BY F. BORTON FOR G. CLARIDGE AND CO. LTD, FRERE ROAD, FORT, BOMBAY, AND PUBLISHED BY GEOFFREY CUMBERLEGE, BOMBAY

FOREWORD

FOR some months now I have hardly read a book. My time is spent in other activities which many people consider important but which certainly are not always pleasant or entertaining. However important these activities might be, I have had to pay a heavy price for them by parting company with books for a while. Regretfully I look at shelves filled with books; sometimes I take out a book and handle it with affection and then put it back again; and then I go back to the dull business of official files and the duller business of interviews. It is a continuous race with time, with time always the winner.

When K. P. S. Menon asked me to write a foreword to his book, I was a little taken aback, and then when he presented me with long galley proofs, which were by no means easy to handle or read, I marvelled at his optimism. And yet I found myself looking into these galley proofs and reading many passages when a wiser man would have sought sleep.

It is good to travel, but if travel is denied then the next best thing is to read books on travel. What more wonderful journey can there be than to follow the old caravan routes right across Asia or from India to China via Turkestan and Sinkiang? I am filled with regret when I think that perhaps I shall never have the time or the opportunity to undertake these long, arduous and yet leisurely journeys. For many years I have gazed at the map of Asia and traced these routes traversed by famous travellers. I have read many books about these travels and sought to satisfy thereby my own wanderlust. Asia fascinates me, the long past of Asia, the achievements of Asia through millennia of history, the troubled present of Asia, and the future that is taking shape almost before our eyes. Perhaps if I actually visit many of the places in Asia, about which I have read so much, I would be disappointed, for the old glory has departed and often where a proud culture

flourished only a backward desert town now remains. It is more satisfying to see ruins which the imagination can fill as it chooses.

I have liked reading K.P.S. Menon's book because it makes good reading and it reminds me of so many of my own fantasies and dreams of long ago. I envy him this journey, but at the same time I am grateful to him for sharing somewhat the experience and excitement of the journey with me. Perhaps before long such journeys will be things of the past with so-called modern progress. It is well, therefore, that we have authentic records of them which will tell people of a later age of experiences which are beyond their reach. We have a noble band of adventurous writers from Hsuan Tsang and Marco Polo to Sven Hedin, Aurel Stein and Peter Fleming. K.P.S. Menon has joined that company. I hope that many will enjoy the reading of his book as I have done, and that this will lead them to a greater understanding of the past and the present of Asia.

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

New Delhi
6 February 1947

PREFACE

My first trip to Chungking in September 1943 took 11 hours from Calcutta; my second, in the second half of 1944, 125 days from Delhi. This book contains the diary of my second trip. When I started keeping a day-to-day record of my experiences and impressions I had no intention of publishing it. Despite its personal character I hope this account of a journey across the Himalayas, the Karakorams and the Pamirs and through the deserts and oases of Central Asia will have at least the interest of a twice-told traveller's tale.

Twice-told, because a number of writers have left vivid accounts of their journeys in Central Asia, among them Hsuan Tsang, Marco Polo, Aurel Stein, C.P. Skrine, Owen Lattimore and Peter Fleming. Yet Central Asia, though always the same, is ever changing. When in the seventh century Hsuan Tsang passed through these regions to India in his quest for Buddhist scriptures, what is now known as Sinkiang was a congeries of Buddhist Kingdoms of which the most illustrious was Khotan. By Marco Polo's time, in the thirteenth century, Buddhism had declined; 'all', said Marco Polo, 'are worshippers of Mahomet'. When Aurel Stein unearthed the Buddhist antiquities of Central Asia the Manchu Empire, of which Sinkiang was a part, was tottering to its fall. To Skrine, who was British Consul-General in Kashgar from 1922 to 1924, Chinese Turkestan was a Central Asian Arcady innocent of Russian Communism and Chinese Kuomintang; and a few years later Owen Lattimore found it a 'political vacuum' from which the Governor of that time jealously shut out the turmoils of the Chinese, no less than the Russian, Revolution. When Peter Fleming travelled through Sinkiang in 1934, General Sheng Shih-ts'ai had just quelled a rebellion of the Tungans with Russian assistance; and for the next ten years he governed Sinkiang with Russian advisers. In 1944 Sheng Shih-ts'ai was displaced and, for

the first time since the Revolution of 1911, the Central Government began to exercise direct authority over Sinkiang. This development synchronized with my own tour ; and I can thus claim to have passed through Sinkiang at a turning-point in its history.

I am grateful to the Government of India for permitting me to undertake this trip and in particular to Olaf Caroe for encouraging me to do so. I am equally grateful to the Government of China for the facilities which they so readily and generously extended to me for my travels in Sinkiang. From the Governor of Sinkiang, Wu Chung-hsin, and General Chu Shao-liang, Supreme Commander of the 8th War Zone, down to the most humble Chinese official, I received great courtesy, assistance and hospitality. The names of friends, old and new, Chinese, British, Russian and Indian, who helped me in various ways are too numerous to mention. Acknowledgements are made in the appropriate places in the diary, but a word of special thanks is due to Michael Gillett, my host and companion in Sinkiang, than whom none could have been more genial or more hospitable. My grateful acknowledgements are also due to him and to 'Jogie' Crichton for lending me some of their photographs; to the Surveyor-General of India for the maps ; to Henry Hodson and Morris Martin for many valuable suggestions and to Frank Moraes for his assistance in the production of the book. Above all, I am grateful to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who, despite terrific pressure of work, found time 'when a wiser man would have sought sleep' to read through the almost unreadable proofs and to write a Foreword. How it reflects his own mood—the wistfulness, the weariness and the unconquerable hopefulness of a man of action who is also a man of dreams!

K.P.S.M.

New Delhi
10 February 1947

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CHAPTER I

ACROSS THE HIMALAYAS

Srinagar, Wednesday, 16 *August* 1944

I am at last ready to begin my trek from the borders of India to Chungking in the heart of China. I have bought my kit, hired my ponies and picked up Rahman, cook as well as guide, who has been with a dozen Himalayan expeditions. I should by now have been beyond the Himalayas and half-way through the Karakorams, if I had been able to fly to Gilgit, as I had planned. On the 8th of August I did fly from New Delhi to Rawalpindi; but there our progress was barred by clouds which rose 10,000 feet above the 15,000, the maximum ceiling of my Anson. I therefore flew back to Delhi the next day and then travelled the 600 miles to Srinagar by road. Here, again, Nature was against me. The rains came, landslides blocked the roads; and a number of bridges were washed away. However, I reached Srinagar on August the 14th; but Gilgit, which I should have reached on the 8th, I shall now not see till the end of the month.

I must confess I was disappointed with Srinagar. Even the Shalimar gardens, celebrated in song and legend, left me cold. Their setting, against the blue hills, was perfect; the apple trees were laden with fruit; the pruned quince trees looked like upturned umbrellas; the cannas were a profusion of colour; and the zinnias were the loveliest I had ever seen. Yet I remained unmoved. Why?, I wondered. Because of the artificiality of it all? Or because of the bald patches in the lawns and the fountains which did not play? Or because there were no pale hands beside the Shalimar? Or because Shalimar and all such speak of a splendour that is gone, never to return?

On the Jhelum, Thursday, 17 *August*

Last evening I had tea with Mrs Premnath and Mrs Vaithianathan who are both so charming and yet so different. They are almost typical specimens of the two races which have gone to make up India. One is Aryan and the other Dravidian; one is, as anthropologists would say, dolichocephalic and the other brachycephalic; one is reposeful and the other vivacious; one is handsome, and the other charming; one, in brief, is classical and the other romantic!

I am now floating lazily down the Jhelum. All around me are scenes of beauty; and yet there is a great emptiness in my heart. I am a home bird; I like to fly about, but with my brood. Without them there seems to be something melancholy in everything I see and hear and feel—the stillness of the evening, accentuated by a jackal's howl or a dog's bark; the darkness of the night, made darker by the star-spangled sky; the distant hum of the village and the singing of village girls in the dark; the weak cry of the boatman's baby which often wakes me up; and the solitary light on the summit of a hill where Gujars have gone to look for grass.

Tragbal, Friday, 18 *August*

I woke up at 7 to find myself crossing the Wular Lake, set in the midst of the dark green hills. Egrets flew by, their wings glimmering in the morning sun, and an occasional duck, precursor of the swarms to come in the autumn.

At Bandipur, Ghulam Rasul, the pony contractor, gave me my first introduction to Central Asian politics, of which he has a fair knowledge, gleaned from the travellers going to and fro. He told me that during the last ten years religion had been at a discount in Sinkiang. This had caused a number of Muslims to leave Sinkiang

and take refuge in places as far away as Lahore, Karachi and even Jeddah. Ghulam Rasul gave me a vivid description of the 5,000 Qazaqs who had recently migrated to India. They suffered incredible hardships; and their cattle and womenfolk and children died like flies.

I left Bandipur at 5. My caravan consists of two riding ponies—mine and Rahman's—and five baggage ponies. Riding ponies! I was to know their nature before long. We rode over the plain for a couple of miles and then climbed to the top of a hill which was at first bare and rocky and afterwards pleasantly pine-clad. We reached Tragbal, 9,840 feet above sea level, 12 miles from Bandipur, at about 9. On our way we had views of the Wular Lake from various angles. We seemed to be playing hide-and-seek with it; it would appear now like the Malabar paddy-fields in water, now like our backwaters of Travancore, and now—especially in the dark—ghostly and sinister like the lake of Kandy. But here lived no lustful monster like the last Kandyan King who goaded the beautiful wife of his Commander-in-Chief to commit suicide in the lake with her twin sons—and to haunt the lake in moonlight nights ever after!

Kuregbal, Saturday, 19 *August*

Today we climbed another 2,000 feet to the top of the Tragbal Pass. This sudden rise of over 6,000 feet since last evening gave me a splitting headache; and I rode, dead tired, into Kuregbal, at 3 in the afternoon.

Gurais, Sunday, 20 *August*

This morning, with an ache-free head, I liked it all—the gurgling stream in front of the rest-house, the little waterfall making a noise out of all proportion to its size, the path above it, winding down to the river, the hill to

our right covered with grass, the pine-clad hill to our left and the blue skies and the fleecy clouds. The Kuregbal rest-house is beautifully situated. It is a new rest-house. The old one was swept away by an avalanche a few years ago.

We left Kuregbal at about 11. I would have liked to start earlier, but Grierson, an officer of the Gilgit Scouts who joined me at Tragbal, was not an early riser. Moreover, he told me he had been disturbed by bugs and fleas last night. We crossed and re-crossed the Kishanganga and rode into the little rest-house at Gurais, 14 miles from Kuregbal, at 3. Today's ride was a perfect joy—hills covered with sweet-smelling artemisia, a valuable drug for diseases of the lungs; roads lined with walnut and hazel trees; and a perfect three-mile lovers' path with overhanging willows. The Kishanganga foamed and billowed over rocks and boulders. Its water was muddy but its colour was slaty grey as compared with the dirty brown of the Jhelum.

A beautiful poster on the walls of my room in the Gurais rest-house greeted me with the enticement:

GOOD PAY

FREE FOOD

CLOTHING AND ACCOMMODATION

What more does one want? And underneath, in inconspicuous letters were the words

JOIN THE NEAREST TECHNICAL RECRUITING CENTRE

As I sat on the verandah, thinking how blue the skies were and how clear-cut the contours of the hills, suddenly masses of clouds, accompanied by a mighty wind, came from nowhere and overspread the sky. Only one patch remained luminous—a triangular patch which formed the gap between the hills to the west. It resembled India's own outline and, in its brilliance amidst the surrounding gloom, reminded me of India herself in the

days of her glory when 'the Light of Asia' radiated from her. We went in to dinner wondering whether, if it rained tonight, as seemed most likely, the streams would be fordable tomorrow and the bridges would be safe. We came out after dinner; and behold! the clouds had gone, the wind had dropped, the sky was clear and the stars were shining.

Pushwari, Monday, 21 *August*

Our ponies had been laden—always a leisurely business—and we were on the point of leaving Gurais for Pushwari, a distance of 14 miles, when a messenger came panting—he had been travelling on foot from Minimarg since midnight—with a letter from Cobb[1] asking me if I could stay on in Gurais as he would meet me there. Within a few minutes Cobb himself arrived. I had not expected him till the afternoon; but his standards of riding are very different from mine. He betook himself to an easy chair on the lawn and started talking. There are some great talkers in our Service—Creagh-Coen, for instance, and Gyan Nath; but Cobb beats them all. And he has an infinite variety of topics. He talked of Ovid and *Ovis Poli*, Gillett and Jenkins, Sadi and Schomberg, Cripps and Cleon. Cobb has as definite views on men as Chitragupta on the souls of the departed. He gave me a vivid description of Gillett who is to be my host in Sinkiang. Gillett with his beard and monocle, said Cobb, was a character. But they did not see eye to eye with each other on certain matters. When he (Cobb) went to Tashkurghan last year to inaugurate the Indo-Sinkiang Postal Service he took with him 200 men, a Band and the Flags of the United Nations; but Gillett thought they were too big a crowd to enter China; and they argued about it for hours over the Mintaka Pass.

[1] Major Cobb, Political Agent, Gilgit.

His meeting with the Chinese officials in Tashkurghan was a landmark; it marked the beginning of the present friendly phase in Indo-Sinkiang relations. He had been trying to keep up these relations by sending messages and presents to the Chinese officials; but Gillett—curse him!—insists that all these should go through him.

Grierson and I left Gurais at about 4 and rode for about ten miles along the Kishanganga—a very pleasant ride. At Kamri hamlet he left me. He is going over the Kamri Pass and I over the Burzil. A vu-rry vu-rry dour Scotsman, he improves on acquaintance. I hope he will rejoin me at Astor. I walked the last three miles and reached Pushwari at about 8. We are now 9,000 feet above sea level; at Gurais we were just over 7,000.

I hear more and more tales of the ill-treatment of Indian traders in Sinkiang under General Sheng Shih-ts'ai's regime. At Pushwari I met Naqvi, an Assistant Surgeon who was returning home after spending four years in Gilgit. He told me that yesterday's millionaires in Sinkiang would appear in Gilgit the next day as paupers thanking their stars for having got away with their lives. Often they were subjected to a refinement of cruelty. They were not allowed to leave Sinkiang without exit permits. For months they would be kept waiting; then, at the height of winter, when the passes were snowbound, exit permits would be issued to them with the direction that they should avail themselves of them within 24 hours. They would leave Kashgar with sufficient transport; suddenly the transport would disappear at a word from the gendarmes. Many died of frostbite; and some committed suicide. And Naqvi told me how one Sahibzada Azim Beg, a British subject from Peshawar, was flayed alive in front of the British Consulate.

Naqvi has been in many out-of-the-way places in Chitral, Kurram, South Waziristan and lately Gilgit.

An attack of typhus which has shattered his nerves obtained for him his reprieve from Gilgit. Major Jackson, with whom I am to stay in Gilgit, looked after him splendidly during his illness; his servant told him that Jackson was in tears by his bedside during the days when he was unconscious. Naqvi spoke of Jackson with the utmost gratitude and affection.

Burzil Chowki, Tuesday, 22 August

Artemisia, artemisia, artemisia everywhere! I like the sound of the word Artemisia, like the old lady who was so fond of the word Mesopotamia that she was never tired of repeating it. Last evening we passed a number of hills covered with artemisia; and this morning the first thing I saw from the window of my bedroom in Pushwari rest-house was an artemisia-covered hill. Artemisia is pleasant to see, to smell and to sound—and, as we saw, for the ponies to eat.

Left Pushwari rest-house after a late breakfast. Rode and walked up an easy gradient in the open Burzil valley. Dropped to the level of the stream at Rathok Bridge, five miles from Pushwari, where I had lunch, consisting of cold chicken and bread-and-butter, by the bubbling Burzil. Arrived at the rest-house at Burzil Chowki, 11,150 feet above sea level, at about 3 p.m. The chowkidar was absent; the bed was broken and the rooms were unswept. My bearer told me this chowkidar was in the habit of staying in his own house in Minimarg, six miles from here, and not in the rest-house as required by the rules. He strolled in at about 8 p.m. When I asked him sharply where he had been he said he was just returning from his daughter's funeral. He didn't look like a bereaved father.

When the shades of the evening were falling, four pathetic figures straggled into the rest-house on even

more miserable ponies than mine—a woman in purdah and three children. I learnt that they were going to join the lady's husband, a minor official in the Gilgit Agency. They had done a double march of 25 miles today from Gurais. Even modern India produces Sitas who follow their husbands into exile!

A messenger arrived late in the evening with a couple of brace of fish which Cobb had caught in the Kishanganga at Badwan. He had travelled 29 miles of mountainous road on foot. These people think nothing of distances! I do! Cobb also sent me a letter, so charmingly characteristic of him. The following extracts show the range of his interests and the agility of his mind :

I am sending you 2 brace; they are quite good fried in fat with salt and pepper. They are not in the wonderful condition in which we find fish in the upper reaches of the Gilgit River. In the Gilgit library you will see a carpet and a brass jar sent to commemorate my meeting with the Amban for the opening of the postal service and also the resumption of a little trade. The bell off the leader of the first caravan is on the piano in the Hall, a present from the caravan leader. Mir of Hunza will be glad to hear that H.E. the Viceroy has accepted the *Ovis Poli* head and is going to present it to the Royal Central Asian, as I had suggested.... It is kind of you to agree to give a small talk on Chungking; you will find the Jacksons kind and interested hosts. Mr Jamal Khan of Hunza would read you his rather amusing diary of our visit to Tashkurghan. He is not very complimentary to Gillett! I find it very difficult to stomach Chinese delicacies, but I suppose you are now quite an 'addict' to them! Especially sea-slugs! Look for a Khotan carpet for yourself in Kashgar. Whatever they may be, the best were made by an Armenian—some such name as Moldoveich? There are 3 small ones in my house—2 in the hall and 1 finished one in the drawing-room, with a distinctive square corner. There is quite a nice Kirghiz rug I got last year in the dining-room—very thick and heavy. All the new designs have poor colour and fade quickly.

What an interesting letter! How his mind flits from

topic to topic! I was reminded of Browning's Bishop whose mind wanders over

> Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
> Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
> The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,
> Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
> Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
> And Moses with the tables . . .

Cobb in Gilgit is the right man in the right place; it affords scope for all his outdoor interests. What a fine Service ours is which can find room for administrators, archaeologists, scribes, shikaris, scholars and social butterflies!

Chillum, Wednesday, 23 August

In perfect weather crossed the Burzil Pass. We left Burzil Chowki, 11,150 feet high, at about 10.30 and rode up and up along a gorge, flanked by confused hills, until we got to the top of the pass, 13,775 feet high, shortly after midday. Since leaving Gurais the hills had been getting more and more bare; now they were entirely destitute of vegetation. Not even the sweet-smelling artemisia was allowed to hide their nudity. There was something rugged and repellent about these hills. Also something grand; only, the grandeur became bathos when these self-important hills were themselves crumbling into rocks and boulders which often blocked our path. Why, I wondered? Because as geologists, who reckon time in millions of years, would say, the Himalayas are a newcomer on the face of the earth, not so sure of themselves as the more solid South Indian mountains, and subject to the earth's disturbances? It was not so much the Burzil Pass as it is now, which impressed me, but as it would be soon. In two or three months, I am told, it will be a gleaming sea of snow. Then indeed it will answer to the descriptions of the Himalayan passes in our classical

poetry. One object on the summit of the pass stirred my imagination—a modest, one-roomed dak-runner's hut, perched on poles 40 feet above the ground so as to be above the snows in winter. And I am told that the snow often came within a few inches of the floor of this room. How hardy are these dak-runners, who, for a pittance, take letters and—now—parcels between India and China across this wild and desolate country, facing the most acute hardships and dangers—landslips, stone-shoots, frostbites and avalanches!

On the top of the pass I met a man on horseback with half a dozen followers, carrying rifles, hookahs and tiffin carriers. I noticed that my bearer and a Muslim contractor who was on his way to Gilgit from Abbottabad saluted him with respect. I was told that the man on horseback was Shaikh Abdullah, a political leader who, for many years, had been a champion of Muslim rights and is now the head of a 'Nationalist Party', consisting of Kashmiri pandits as well as Muslims. He seems to be somewhat of a legend amongst the simple folk in Kashmir. My companion told me that some Kashmiri Muslims even regarded Abdullah as a *Paighambar* (Prophet). Latterly, however, his title to omniscience had suffered by the rise of a rival party, affiliated to the All-India Muslim League. This party, I was told, was gaining in influence; but the Maulvi who was the leader of this exclusive Muslim party did not possess Abdullah's fiery tongue. Moreover, the contractor told me, the Maulvi was playing up to the British. When asked how, he merely replied: 'So they say', and presently joined his womenfolk who were in purdah.

Godai, Thursday, 24 August

I cannot get my caravan to start when I want. This packing and loading of ponies is an infernally slow

business. I didn't have the heart to rush the pony men. A bitterly cold wind was blowing at Chillum; and it was pathetic to see those shivering wretches trying to warm themselves by a fire in the open. From now onwards I must be less soft-hearted, for the heat is, I am told, going to be intense until we get to Gilgit; and daily we must try and get to our destination by noon.

Left Chillum at 10 30. To the east a track leads to Skardu where, Lord Wavell told me with tender reminiscence, he did a trek as a soldier some 40 years ago. As usual we proceeded northwards. The distance to Godai was 16 miles. All the way we followed the Astor River. Just as we had been going along the Burzil stream from its junction with the Kishanganga at Gurais to its source in the Burzil Pass, so (but in a reverse direction) we shall now follow the Astor River from its source in the Burzil Pass to its junction with the Indus at Ramghat. Soon after we left Chillum the valley opened out; and it was a pleasure to see yellowing fields of ripening wheat. I also saw a polo-ground belonging to a village with a curiously Bengali name, Das; we are fast approaching that home of polo, Hunza. Only one thing repelled me, the village itself. It consisted of a number of ramshackle wooden houses, built almost on top of one another. There is the infinity of God's own space for these people to live in; and yet they must huddle themselves together in the most insanitary fashion. Why? Not for safety, for I gather that in these regions thefts and robberies are rare. Not because of poverty, for the village, with its extensive lands, looked distinctly prosperous. How much more sensible we are on the West Coast where we live, not in villages as in the rest of India, but in garden-houses of our own!

Arrived at the fly-ridden rest-house at Godai shortly after 4. We are now at a height of only 9,000 feet, after the 14,000 which we passed through yesterday. Here

I met an interesting wayfarer, Haji Sadiq and his companion, Haji Qurban Ali. Like myself they are also on their way to Kashgar and Khotan. Sadiq is a tailor and Qurban Ali a maker of durries. Haji Sadiq told me that in Khotan he had land, a house, two Turki wives and four children. Ten years ago he went on a pilgrimage to Mecca from Khotan. On his return to Karachi he was told that it was not safe to go back to Sinkiang. Now that conditions had improved, he was going back to rejoin his family. Qurban Ali, a septuagenarian, is accompanied by his wife, whom he recently married in Kashmir, and a lovely little child by her. I was reminded of the Scout at Oxford who, on being told by a Don, who had had no children in 25 years of married life, that he had just had a baby, pulled a long face and asked 'Whom do you suspect?'

Astor, Friday, 25 August

Today we covered seventeen miles from Godai to Astor—the first ten on foot, the next three on horseback and the last four on foot. I walked the first ten miles out of choice and the last four out of fear, for it was so steep a descent that I was nervous that my pony, which was proving a little temperamental, might trip and fall. For the first ten miles we walked at first along the left bank, then along the right bank and then again along the left bank of the Astor River. Its water was crystal clear; it seemed to smile at us in companionship while rippling into white foam over the rocks. I had lunch under an overhanging rock by the river where my transport joined me later. After a little rest, we crossed over again to the right bank by a suspension bridge of which my pony was nervous. We passed two or three villages, situated picturesquely on hillocks and surrounded by groves of walnut. After Guriot the entire aspect changed. The

road rose steeply over the Astor River; and the river which had been so friendly to us, looked cavernous. The towering hillsides looked as if they had been cut and sliced by some world-embracing monster in a moment of tempestuous fury so as to provide a passage for the Astor River. At about the thirteenth mile from Godai, we began to descend sharply until we reached the sixteenth mile and then the path rose to Astor through a lovely avenue of poplars and willows and past a Pir's tomb, the Wazir Wazarat's bungalow, the Rajah of Astor's palace and, what pleased me most, some superb walnut trees.

I shall never forget the evening hour I spent on the verandah of the rest-house—the tall poplars swaying in the breeze, the apple tree in the garden, the noisy mountain torrent bringing down the molten snow of Rama into the Astor, the towering hilltops lit by the last rays of the setting sun and, when it disappeared, the young moon shining forth with precocious brightness.

Mushkin, Saturday, 26 August

The trek from Astor to Mushkin, 18 miles, was difficult and dull. The hills were more barren than ever. The Burzil hills, rising to twenty thousand feet, are splendid in their nudity; but these hills of a mere ten thousand feet have no right to be bare. It is as if Mr Jinnah, who is the best-dressed man in India, were to adopt the ample bareness of Mahatma Gandhi's poverty. The Astor River too, along whose banks we rose and fell precipitately, brought us no comfort. It was no longer, what it was to us near Chillum and Godai, babbling to us like Tennyson's 'Brook' and like Tennyson himself in his less inspired and thoroughly self-satisfied poems. Its whole nature had changed. It had become muddy and turbid. It rushed headlong to join the Indus, heedless of the wayfarers struggling high above

it with their lives in their hands. On our way to Mushkin from Astor one of the ponies fell over a rickety bridge and was nearly washed away with a couple of my boxes. The pony men looked on helplessly but Rahman, my bearer, heroically saved the pony and the boxes. We arrived dead tired in the Mushkin rest-house at about 9 p.m.—only to find that it was infested with flies, sand-flies, mosquitoes—and men.

Bunji, Sunday, 27 August

I left Mushkin this morning with no regrets. It was the worst spot we had struck so far—or the only bad spot. It was infernally hot, though Mushkin is higher than Solon. And the rest-house and its keeper were both old and dilapidated. The track from Mushkin to Bunji (18 miles) was rough going—especially as far as Ramghat. It had been raining last night; and in many places the hillside was coming down. One slip on the part of the pony or its rider, and both would find themselves in pieces in the unsympathetic Astor. I preferred to trust to my own feet—and heart—and walked the very difficult 11 miles to Ramghat where the Astor, to our satisfaction, disappeared in the Indus. By this time my feet were covered with blisters; I was thirsty; the water we had brought with us from Mushkin was finished; the water of the Astor River was not drinkable; and the heat was intense. There was no shade anywhere; and a small shed in Ramghat, which raised hopes of a little rest, was full of straw and cowdung. So, on we went over the stony wastes by the left bank of the Indus valley. The sun's heat and radiation were trying; and I arrived, very tired, at the Bunji rest-house at about 5 p.m. I tried to snatch a little rest, but the flies were determined not to permit it. Here we are 4,600 feet above sea level but it is uncomfortably hot.

However, I have one consolation for all the hardships of the last two days · I am face to face with Nanga Parbat, 26,621 feet high. I used to get distant (and often imaginary) glimpses of Nanga Parbat from Nathiagali in 1927 and 1928; now it lies spread out before me. There is a slight mist over it.

> Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then
> Round the half-glimpsed turrets slowly wash again.

Through the mists we can see its contours, here heavily and there lightly overlaid with snow. As I started writing today's diary, Nanga Parbat had a golden glow in the last rays of the setting sun; but now (7.30 p.m.) it looks white and mellow in the light of the half-moon.

Safed Parri, Monday, 28 August

Nanga Parbat set Rahman talking. He had been with a number of Himalayan expeditions. One of the most tragic was the German expedition to Nanga Parbat in 1937. I remember its leader, Dr Bauer, a fat chubby little man who called on me in Simla where I was a Deputy Secretary in the External Affairs Department 'dealing with' Himalayan expeditions. Rahman told me in graphic detail how, on the fateful night, Dr Bauer and eight of his comrades decided to pitch their camp on a certain spot, how the Ladakhi porters tried to dissuade them as that spot was a favourite one for avalanches, how the Germans laughed at their fears but let the porters pitch their tents elsewhere and how the next morning there was not a trace of Dr Bauer and his comrades. Rahman also described how Dr Bauer's brother came out by air, how the bodies were unearthed (or unsnowed), how fresh and lifelike the men looked in their sleeping-bags and how Dr Bauer's brother decided to leave them in the eternal snows.

Rahman is a great hiker. He has been to the Karakorams, the Pamirs, the T'ien Shan range and the Darjeeling hills with explorers and shikaris. He accompanied a famous Italian scholar on his expedition to Tibet. That scholar, Rahman told me, used to bribe Tibetan monks heavily, steal into the monasteries at night, buy Buddhist manuscripts and walk all night to escape detention and pursuit. What a help Rahman has been to me! As a cook he is unbeatable; he makes such excellent scones. He speaks Hindustani and Kashmiri rather comically like a Sahib; and his deep and resonant voice, unlike mine, seems to bow pony-men, and even ponies, to his will. I shall be sorry to discharge him at Gilgit.

If I had a glimpse of the eternal snows today I also had a view of the eternal sand. Leaving Bunji at about 9, we rode over some ten miles of sandy and stony plain, dry, arid and waterless. The waterlessness is the more ironical and frightening as away to our left, between precipitous banks, ran the Indus, alone, unfriended, melancholy, slow. I was told that many an unwary traveller had fainted with thirst and heat in this inhospitable region. By the time we reached Pratab Pul, where the Gilgit River joins the Indus, the heat was unbearable. I rested in the Police chowki—or tried to rest, for there were swarms of determined flies. We left Pratab Pul at about sunset and rode along a sandy plain until we reached Safed Parri three hours later. There under the moon and in a charming grove Khan Sahib Mohammed Yaqub, the Assistant Political Agent, Gilgit, entertained me to dinner, laid out in English style with some excellent Pathan dishes. I went to bed early but was awakened at midnight by the noise of the arrival of the new Commandant of the Gilgit Scouts, cursing the chowkidar for failing to reserve the entire rest-house for him. With him were 33 ponies, carrying his luggage,

his weary wife and two children repeatedly crying 'Mummy, mummy, water'.

Gilgit, Tuesday, 29 August

We left Safed Parri at dawn and had breakfast in a pleasant grove in Minawar village, half-way to Gilgit. At the outskirts of Gilgit, what was my surprise when I saw a whole crowd, including all the senior officials of the station, British and Indian, and a number of traders from the bazaar, waiting to receive me! I dismounted from my horse, shook hands with all of them and remounted with as much grace as I could muster. Then started the triumphal procession through the bazaar, which had been gaily decorated in my honour, with a village band playing in front and the flags of the United Nations. (Only, they had left out the American flag, but had two of China instead!) I do not know what I felt like—like Julius Caesar entering Rome in triumph or a village bridegroom being paraded through the town before the marriage ceremony. . . . However, this, I suppose, is one of the ways in which we keep our end up in this farthest outpost of the Empire!

I reached the Jacksons' house, where I was to stay, in time for lunch. Mrs Jackson made me feel at home from the moment I met her; she is one of those women who know exactly what is the right thing to do and to say at the right moment. Major Jackson is a lovable and nervous-looking individual, competent, extremely conscientious and overflowing with the milk of human kindness. He was born and brought up in Travancore; and this straightaway established a bond between us. One after another the Malayalam words which he had picked up in his childhood came back to him; and he could even remember the elaborate titles of the Maharaja

of Travancore. He had fought in East Africa and served, like myself, on the Indian Frontier and in Rajputana; but his affections, like mine, are rooted in Travancore.

What a well-ordered house the Jacksons' is! What a change from the fly- and sandfly-infested rest-houses I have been staying in! The house looks like a quaint English country cottage with the floors, on different levels, creaking as you walk. Mrs Jackson has taste; her sketches of the scenes we passed through—the Gurais valley and the Tragbal and the Burzil Pass—are exquisite. There is even a piano in this house, though how it came up is a mystery. Mrs Jackson knows the art of hospitality. Her idea of entertaining guests is exactly the same as Anujee's and mine—leaving them alone. If Cobb were here he, in his overwhelming kindness, would have rushed me about all over the place; but I think Mrs Jackson 'placed' me as soon as she saw me. She knew that riding was anathema to me, especially after the last few days; and without riding or walking it was impossible for one to get about in Gilgit. She therefore left me alone in my little cottage, separate from theirs—free to sleep, to read, to write and to prepare for the onward journey. Only, she felt she must give a dinner party in my honour. All the British officers of the station were present. The most exciting subject of conversation was the recent increase in the price of mutton in Gilgit. One of the women present—not my hostess—got so excited over Cobb's conduct in sanctioning the increase without consulting the British residents that she said she had decided to boycott the butchers. And yet Gilgit is the cheapest place in India today! After dinner there was a little bridge and mahjong. I would have preferred to go to sleep. How sensible is the custom of China where guests are expected to depart immediately after dinner!

Gilgit, Wednesday, 30 August

In Gilgit the world came rushing into my being. For the last fourteen days, so far as I was concerned, the world did not exist—except for an endless succession of hills and streams. For all I knew or cared there might have been no war on. But now came news of great happenings. Paris was in Allied hands; the Russians were continuing their irresistible advance through Poland; a good bit of the Riviera had been occupied by British and American troops; Rumania had declared war on Germany; more islands in the Pacific had been taken and there was another air attack on the mainland of Japan. Advance everywhere. Yes, everywhere except in the political sphere in India. Hindu-Muslim agreement seems as far off as ever; the Gandhi-Jinnah meeting which had been fixed for the 19th could not come off on account of Mr Jinnah's illness, and the Viceroy has once more said that a National Government, in the sense in which the Congress envisage it, is out of the question during the war.

I spent the whole of this morning with Khan Sahib Khurshed Ahmad Khan, the Indian Assistant to the Political Agent, settling numerous details for the journey to Kashgar. He was most helpful in dealing with the new cook, the new bearer and the new caravanbashi, a rosy-cheeked man, who has, under Gillett's orders, brought 14 ponies for me all the way from Chinese Turkestan. Helpful and exceedingly efficient, Khurshed Ahmad Khan is one of those cogs without which the machinery of administration cannot revolve. He has been in Gilgit for nearly ten years. Political Agents come and go but the Indian Assistant to the Political Agent goes on for ever.

In the evening I attended a dinner party given in my honour by the Central Asian traders in Gilgit. They read out an Address in which they recited the hardships

suffered by them during the last ten years and expressed the hope that my visit to Sinkiang would usher in a more prosperous era for Indian traders. I replied suitably (I hope) but warned them not to expect any miraculous results from my visit to Sinkiang. Jackson told me he was glad I had the moral courage to utter this warning.

Gilgit, Thursday, 31 *August*

For the last few weeks I had been a vagabond; but in Gilgit I am not allowed to forget that I am an official. Major Vaughan showed me round the Gilgit Scouts' Lines. They have excellent Lines, compared with those of the Zhob Militia who have far more arduous duties to perform. While the Zhob Militia had to deal with men—and supermen like Pale[1]—the Gilgit Scouts have to deal mostly with—to use a phrase of Schomberg's—'trousered women'. Major Vaughan also showed me with legitimate pride his rifles, stores (from which I bought two pairs of *chaplis*), tailor's shop and armourer's shop. But there was one object in which I was more interested than all these—a lovely chenar tree in front of the Scouts' Lines. Even that Puritan Emperor, Aurangzeb, could not resist the beauty of a chenar tree. There is a story that on one occasion it was reported to the Emperor that the great mosque in Srinagar had caught fire and was burnt to ashes. The Emperor showed no emotion; he merely asked, 'What about the chenar tree in front of the mosque?' The next day the Mullah of the mosque went to the Emperor and in fear and trembling put the following question: 'Oh, Shadow of God, how is it that when I reported the destruction of the mosque yesterday your Majesty showed no concern for the House of God, but only for the chenar tree?' 'The House of God', replied the Emperor, 'I can replace, but not the chenar tree'.

[1] A notorious outlaw.

G C L Cnct

The Karakorams, directly above Baltit in Hunza

The Mir, the Wazir and the Author (*see pp.* 31-2)

From the Scouts' Lines I went on to the hospital. It was as great a surprise to see so well-run and well-equipped a hospital in this out-of-the-way place as to see the oasis of Gilgit itself after the purgatory of Bunji and Safed Parri. One object attracted my attention—a wooden leg. It belonged to the late Political Agent, Galbraith, who preceded me as Under-Secretary to the Chief Commissioner in Peshawar. With the wooden leg, now in front of me, what feats Galbraith could perform—riding, trekking, dancing and swimming! He and his wife lost their lives while boating in the Naltar stream. He nearly swam ashore but seeing his wife struggling in deep water went to save her; and both were drowned. I paid my respect to his memory in the cemetery where their grave bears the touching inscription—

REMEMBER
IAN AND MARY GALBRAITH
1939

It bears no such embellishment as 'Resting in the Lord'. Anyhow Galbraith always had his doubts whether there was a Lord to rest in.

From the cemetery I went on to the polo-ground in Gilgit—*the* polo-ground, for there are four here and this is the latest and the best. It is Cobb's creation, laid out with exquisite taste. This polo-ground has won for Cobb the blessings of the public and the curses of a few zemindars from whom the land was acquired. On one side of the polo-ground is a chronogram in the approved Persian style; and on the other the following appropriate inscription:

Let other people play at other things.
The king of games is still the game of Kings.

CHAPTER II

THE KARAKORAM GORGES AND GLACIERS

Nomal, Friday, 1 September

LEFT Gilgit at 7. Crossed the Suspension Bridge—one of the longest in India—three miles from Gilgit and passed the aerodrome at which I should have landed three weeks ago. Khan Sahib Khurshed Ahmad Khan accompanied me as far as the aerodrome. When we passed a saint's tomb on the opposite hill, out of respect the locals got down from their horses. The locals have a habit of getting down from their horses when they pass not only dead saints but living 'Sahibs', in which category I too am included, presumably because I wear a hat. Rode along, and occasionally away from, the left bank of the Hunza River over country which was alternately rocky and sandy. Arrived in the delightful little village of Nomal at about 12.

The Nomal rest-house was a surprise to me, so well furnished, so scrupulously clean, so absolutely fly-proof. The rest-houses in the Gilgit sub-division are a refreshing change from those in Kashmir. The Kashmir rest-houses are generally well situated and well built but badly looked after. Broken glass is never repaired; missing windows never replaced; durries never cleaned and fly-proof doors never used. In fact the only use of these fly-proof doors is to keep the flies in rather than out of the rooms! The 'Gilgit road' is used every now and then by men of international fame—explorers, authors, archaeologists—and it is a pity that the Kashmir P.W.D. does not realize that it is these rest-houses which give them their first impressions of Kashmir—and India.

Mrs Jackson continues to be kind even after I have left her hospitable house. She has sent a special messenger to Nomal with the latest war news. It runs as follows:

Rouen captured
Amiens do.
Somme crossed
Valence taken
Americans 10 miles from the Belgian Frontier
Gen. Montgomery promoted Field-Marshal
Bucharest captured
Pesaro do.
Now up against the Gothic Line
Rumoured Hungary likely to pack up shortly.

What a mouthful! I wrote and thanked her for serving it to me hot even as she used to serve the delicious trout which her husband caught in the Gilgit River.

Chalt, Saturday, 2 September

Last night I sat out on the lawn in front of the Nomal rest-house, waiting for the full—or almost full—moon to appear. It seemed to me that she did not deign to do so for an unconscionably long time. I noticed, however, that the hills to the right, to the left and at the back of the rest-house were bright with moonlight. Only the rest-house was still in darkness; between the moon and the rest-house, there stood a mighty hill. Suddenly, the moon sprang up over the hill, with the magnificent effrontery of a superb cinema star before whom all other players pale into insignificance. I had never seen the moon so brilliant; she was almost blinding in her brightness; I could not bear to look at her for more than a few seconds.

This morning the sky was overcast. It was just as well, for it made the march from Nomal to Chalt less of an ordeal than it otherwise might have been. We had to ride or walk over three or four formidable parris—

tracks, often no more than 18 inches to 3 feet wide, carved out of the living rock, with the hills towering above and the valleys yawning below us, as if to devour us, horse, rider and all. Going up these parris is bad enough; but going down them is just terrifying. When these precipitous descents came, I invariably dismounted, even at the risk of 'losing face' with my escort. What hardy riders these folk are! My Hunza bearer sits on my raincoat and other things, tied on the horse, uses them as a saddle, and rides without stirrups. Even I am getting used to my horse. I trotted wherever I could and covered the 15 formidable miles from Nomal to Chalt in four hours. Yesterday we covered the 17 miles from Gilgit to Nomal in five hours. I am improving!

This rest-house is as well furnished as the one in Nomal. Like the Nomal rest-house, it has an odd collection of books and magazines—the novels of Jane Austen, *Where Love Is*, *Punch*, *Lilliput*, *Men Only*, and *Men, Mice and Mustard Pot*. Looking through *Men Only*, I noticed one curious thing. The nude pictures of coloured women had been left intact, but those of white women had been carefully removed.

To come across *Punch* here was a joy. There was a picture in *Punch* of the 20th July 1938 which exactly reflected my own feeling in those moments of weariness when I am tired of this endless succession of bare hills, muddy streams and frightening parris. In the forefront of that picture are two blasé women, looking at Nature and telling each other, obviously bored, 'Scenery is all right for a day or two; but to live with, a thousand times No!'

Hindi, Sunday, 3 September

During this trek of mine Nature seems determined to give a display of all her powers, benevolent and

malevolent. When last evening I was talking to the Rajah of Chalt on the verandah of the rest-house, a heavy wind started blowing. Soon it turned into a dust-storm. The Rajah was facing the wind and was temporarily blinded, and we both had to go indoors. The storm howled and raged all night and in the morning turned into rain. We all put on our raincoats and started off for Hindi at about 8.

The Rajah of Chalt escorted me for about seven miles to the boundary of his ilaqa which is marked by a tiny but lofty waterfall. What a lot of mushroom 'Rajahs' there are in these parts—the Rajah of Astor, who tried to induce me to buy some of his old stock of whisky and wines; the Rajah of Gilgit, who turned up at the traders' dinner in full evening clothes, with the collar put on upside down; and now the Rajah of Chalt. I was surprised to note the deference paid to him by his people; they would stop by the wayside and kiss his hands. Actually at present he is no more than a Jagirdar—and a poor one at that—under the Mir of Nagar. He told me apologetically that he could not do much to entertain me; for even that required the permission of the Mir of Nagar, on the one hand, and the Political Agent, on the other. His ancestors, he said, used to enjoy far more power and prestige. How some people still sigh for the good old days when every little potentate could do what he would!

Having left the Rajah of Chalt's ilaqa, which is now really the Mir of Nagar's, we entered Hunza. The Mir of Hunza had considerately sent a number of men to remove the obstructions on the road caused by last night's rain. Preceded by these men, carrying spades and shovels, and a grey-bearded lambardar, I made my entry into the first Hunza village, Hussainabad. The women looked picturesque with their embroidered caps; evidently they were fertile too as I now saw more children than anywhere else on this trek. The men were extremely respectful;

but there was nothing sheepish about them as there was about the people between Burzil and Astor. I was presented with a number of *dalis*, consisting of the most luscious apples, apricots, grapes and pears. I have not seen any better, not even in Baluchistan. We went on to a village called Mayun. Here I shared my lunch with Safdar Ali, a relative of the Rajah of Gilgit and an Accountant in the Gilgit Political Agent's office, whom Cobb has kindly deputed to accompany me as far as Baltit. After as well as before Mayun there were some formidable parris which dropped sheer into the hateful Hunza River, hundreds of feet below us.

At about 4 we reached the vicinity of Hindi where we were to spend the night. The Wazir of Hunza met me a mile outside the village with the leading lambardars and a number of spectators. A procession was formed, the Village Band playing in front and the children shrieking shouts of welcome. The resultant cacophony was a mixture of South Indian temple music and some Negro yells when they are about to flay a victim. And thus I have arrived in the Hindi rest-house which has myriads of flies, a mud floor, a hole in the ground which serves as a commode, and a hole in the ceiling which serves as the only ventilator.

Baltit, Monday, 4 September

Last night was the first cold night after Astor. Memories of the heat and discomfort of the nights and marches in the Mushkin-Bunji parri region still haunt me. Now we are rising higher day by day. Gilgit was just below 5,000 feet; Nomal, 5,500; Chalt, 6,500; Hindi (at a guess) 7,500 and now in Baltit we have touched 8,000 feet. And in another ten days, from the lofty eminence of the Mintaka Pass, 15,450 feet high, we shall, by God's grace, look down upon the mere 8,000 feet of Baltit.

Today again the sky was overcast; and all the way from Hindi to Baltit it was drizzling. There was fresh-fallen snow on the hills. It looked as if some mysterious Hand had decorated these hills with circle after circle of manna from heaven. I have only one complaint against this weather; it robbed me of a view of Mt Rakhaposhi.

I had an interesting conversation with the Wazir, Inayatullah Beg. He has little education and no English, but he has had no lack of training in the school of experience. A well-set-up man of 65, he looks 50. He has fewer grey hairs than myself (does he dye them?) and he sits a horse as to the manner born. Also there is a caustic and humorous touch about his conversation. His father too used to be Wazir of Hunza. He appears to have been a remarkable man. He was the first in these parts to obtain the coveted title of Khan Bahadur. He led a force of Hunza volunteers in the Chitral Campaign of 1895 to relieve Col. Robertson and his men who had been besieged by the Mehtar of Chitral. His greatest feat was to conduct Lord Kitchener and Major-General Nicholson on a secret visit to, and beyond, the Indo-Sino-Russian frontier. For this he received certain allowances which his family still enjoy.

Accompanied by the Wazir we left Hindi at about 8.30. We rode and walked tremblingly over another fierce parri on the left side of the Hunza River. At about the sixth mile the country opened out into the delightful village of Murtazabad. More villages followed until we emerged into Aliabad, dotted with fields, orchards and vineyards. What a lot of labour has gone into the making of these fields! Here every inch of ground has to be wrested from an unkind Nature and converted by dint of human toil to the service of man. The poplars give a Kashmir touch, and the terracing a Chinese touch, to the countryside; but the setting is Hunza's own, with desolate hills, rocky or crumbling, rising to the skies or falling

precipitately to the river. At Aliabad Jamal Khan, the son and heir to the Mir of Hunza, met me on his fine Badakshan horse. A charming young man, with perfect manners and speaking excellent English (though he said he had only studied up to the 7th class). The kind of young man one takes to the moment one sees him and grows to like more and more.

Leaving Aliabad we rode along a beautiful path, with an irrigation channel on one side and willows and poplars on both sides, into the capital of Hunza, Baltit.

One has only to look at the map to realize the importance of Hunza. Not far from Hunza meet—or almost meet—the borders of India, China, Russia and Afghanistan. Indeed, during the T'ang dynasty the Chinese, then at the height of their power, having conquered, as their historians put it, 'the Syrians, Arabs and 72 kingdoms of barbarian peoples who were all seized with fear and made their submission', performed the remarkable feat of sending an army of 100,000 men which marched up the Pamirs from Kashgar, crossed the Darkot Pass (15,400 feet) into Yasin, occupied the whole of the Gilgit and Hunza valley, then known as Little Polu, and turned it into a military district with a garrison of 10,000 men. By the end of the eighth century Chinese authority in this region declined—and indeed disappeared for ever; but the tradition of Chinese dominion over Kanjut has survived. And until the Revolution of 1911 the Rulers of Hunza used to send 16 misqals of gold to the Emperor of China for which they got handsome presents in return. Hunza, the Mir told me, used to stretch as far as Dafdar beyond the Mintaka Pass—the present Wazir's grandfather nearly built a fort there—and until recently Hunza had the right not merely to graze their cattle in the Pamirs but to levy grazing fees from others who did. Quietly and unostentatiously but effectively the Government of India have now brought the Ruler of Hunza exclusively

into the Indian orbit. Whether India attains dominion status or formal independence, it will be to her interest to adhere to the main lines of her present Frontier Policy. Questioned how he would ward off an invasion from the direction of Afghanistan, Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of non-violence, is reported to have said, 'By love'. That day seems farther off than ever in the present state of international politics. Kautilya, known as the Indian Machiavelli, defined an enemy 2,200 years ago as 'that State which is situated on the border of one's own State'. In other words, what constitutes a State an enemy, actual or potential, is not its conduct but its mere proximity. A brutal definition, this; but borne out by world history. China and India have been exceptions and, let us hope, they will remain so. However, the realism of Kautilya is a useful corrective to our idealism in international politics.

Baltit, Tuesday, 5 September

Early morning, when it was still dark, I was awakened by the cry of Azan, ringing in these hills and valleys where Buddhist monks once used to recite *Om mani padme hum.* It is the season of *roza,* but the only person who is observing the Fast in Hunza seems to be Jamal Khan. The Wazir of Hunza told me that he and *roza* were enemies! God had sent man into this world to enjoy himself for a little while and eat a little food; why, said the Wazir, deny oneself these pleasures? And that is the general attitude of the inhabitants of Hunza. They are all Maulais, followers of the Aga Khan. I noticed here the same veneration for the Aga Khan as I did in Kenya and Zanzibar. Only Jamal Khan has serious doubts about his divinity. He related to me an interesting incident. Last year, when Baltit was afflicted by an epidemic of typhoid, his father asked him to send a

telegram to the Aga Khan, imploring his intercession with God. Jamal Khan demurred. The Aga Khan, he said, was God; how could you send a telegram to God or ask God to intercede with God? His father was annoyed; and a telegram was dispatched. Result: a large stock of medicines came from the Aga Khan; the epidemic subsided; and the people regarded this as another proof of the Aga Khan's divinity.

This morning I read a fascinating book on the history of Hunza, Nagar and Gilgit and particularly on his own remarkable life by the late Mir, Sir Muhammad Nazim Khan.

What a lurid light it throws on the state of affairs in these regions before the authority of the Government of India was brought home to them at the end of the last century! His story begins with a woman ruler of Baltistan, a nymphomaniac, who 'was in the habit of contracting a secret alliance with any handsome youth who for the moment caught her fancy; and when a child was born the father was quietly done away with'; and a male ruler of Gilgit 'who at first ate one-year-old kids only and later on began eating human children from one to seven years of age'. From these legendary days the story proceeds to the nineteenth century—a blood-curdling tale of assassinations, raids on caravans, slave traffic, and perpetual wars between Hunza, Nagar, Yasin, Punial and Kashmir. With Col. Durand's Hunza Campaign of 1891 which resulted in the deposition of Mir Safdar Ali Khan, a patricide who interfered with the Government of India's mails to Kashgar, and the installation of his half-brother, Mohammed Nazim Khan, as ruler of Hunza, a new era began; and this Frontier is now enjoying such peace as it had not known for a thousand years and as the better-known North-West Frontier is not enjoying even today.

In the afternoon I had tea with the Mir of Hunza in

an unpretentious house which he has built for himself below his 800-year-old Castle. He lives in this house during summer and in the Castle in winter. There is not even a decent dining-room in this house. Pointing to the bare hills he said: 'How could I obtain timber for a large house? I hate harassing my people for money or material.' If only all our Indian Princes were so considerate! He spoke to me with considerable acumen of the problems of his little State—the poverty of the people, the paucity of cultivable land, Cobb's polo-grounds, the loss of the grazing rights in Sarikol and the seizure in 1936 of 300 of his sheep and two of his men by the Sinkiang authorities who are still detaining them in Tashkurghan. Evidently the Mir is somewhat hard up. He asked me point-blank what my pay was. I said Rs. 4,500. 'A month?' he asked in astonishment. 'Yes,' I said. He threw up his hands in despair and said, 'And I get Rs. 7,000 *a year* as compensation for the loss of my grazing rights in the Pamirs'. However, he felt a little relieved when I told him that Rs. 4,500 did not carry me very far in Chungking where a pound of mutton cost Rs. 35, a pound of fish Rs. 45, a tin of cigarettes Rs. 250 and a bottle of whisky—this touched his heart—Rs. 1,500!

Atabad, Wednesday, 6 September

Left Baltit this morning after two days' delightful halt. Dominant among my impressions of Baltit are those of the Mir's Castle and Mt Rakhaposhi. For miles around one could see the Castle, a fort-like whitewashed structure, with high and massive walls, perched on a crag in front of hills rising 15,000 feet and now wreathed with last night's snow. From the bay window of his Castle the Mir looks out on one of the grandest sights in the world, Mt Rakhaposhi, 25,550 feet high.

Looking at my map I find that Mt Rakhaposhi is

marked on Kailas Range. If my mother were alive today this is the part of my trek in which she would have been most interested. To her it was the abode of Shiva How often, and how melodiously, had she read out to me descriptions of Kailas from our Puranas! It was here that Shiva sported with Parvathy; it was here that He sat in meditation; it was here that He burnt to ashes that impertinent God of Love who disturbed Him it was here that the elephant-headed God of Wisdom Ganesha, was born. Kailas has been a favourite subject not only with our poets but our painters. In the Ajanta caves there is a painting of Shiva, the God of the Mountains, and Parvathy, the Lady of the Snows—His features delineated in all their nobility and Hers in all their grace—poised on snowy Kailas like birds resting on their wings Was it Rakhaposhi, I wondered, which inspired our poets and painters? It is a thousand feet lower than Nanga Parbat, but far more majestic. A perpendicular wall of ice, it stabs the blue heavens. Compared to Nanga Parbat with its 'great smooth marbly limbs', Rakhaposhi is a he-man among peaks, a giant among mountains.

Just before leaving Baltit I found, much to my annoyance, that my pony had been changed, or exchanged with a pony of the Mir who, my servants said, took mine I was just getting used to this pony which had come all the way from Kashgar to take me there—a nice, quiet and yet by no means lethargic creature. It was of course not the Mir who took my pony, but one of his servants without his knowledge; and I insisted on having it back And, thanks to Jamal Khan, I did

We covered the 10 miles from Baltit to Atabad in 3½ hours. The Mir's Wazir accompanied me as far as Altit, where there is a picturesque fort, lovely orchards and the inevitable polo-ground. Then we walked up to the top of a hill, and walked down again to the stream over a parri which in places was no more than 18 inches

in width. How the ponies, carrying my baggage, come through these tracks without mishap is a surprise to me. We rode up a seemingly interminable ascent by a zigzag path and then walked down to the village of Atabad. While approaching Atabad we saw an extraordinary sight. Some time ago, a whole hill, with rocks and boulders as big as dinosaurs, came down during the rains and blocked the river for quite a fortnight. So effectively was the river blocked that, to the amazement of the villagers, the river which had been flowing towards Baltit flowed back towards Passu! The cultivation in Atabad was altogether ruined. Now they are beginning to cultivate their lands again. Verily these people live in the Valley of the Shadow of Death; but there is no padre in these parts to tell them so.

Gulmit, Thursday, 7 September

Today's march from Atabad to Gulmit across the Karakorams was the most trying I have ever done or, I devoutly hope, I shall ever do.

The Karakorams! What a harsh-sounding name! And how appropriate! There is something singularly harsh about these hills—harsh and forbidding. They are absolutely destitute of vegetation. The picture is one of utter desolation. Between Atabad and Gulmit we saw no trace of life—except an occasional lizard running across our path or a butterfly of as sombre a colour as its own surroundings. These hills do not even possess the saving grace of strength. They look moth-eaten; they look as if they are crumbling to pieces. In particular the slanting hill in front of the Atabad rest-house looked as if it might fall any moment and crush the rest-house and all like its compeer on the other side which fell down and blocked the river and indeed turned it back. And in the evening the serrated tops of these hills assumed fantastic

shapes like those figures, which you see in certain South Indian temples, of sprites and goblins which seem to jeer at the antics of man.

Today's march of 11 miles—or so we think it was, for there are no milestones beyond Baltit—took us five hours. This march may be described as 'one damned parri after another'. Hardly would we clamber up and then down one parri when another big mountain would heave in sight. We would wonder how on earth we were going to tackle this hill when Nasiro, whom the Mir of Hunza has deputed to accompany me, would point to a long serpentine track rising and falling in the midst of it. One of these parris is called 'Lord Kitchener parri'; and there is a tablet to commemorate his visit to this valley in August, 1902. After this lordly parri the valley seemed to open out a little, but not for long. Again we were confronted with a jumble of hills which we parri-ed one after another. And thus we arrived in Gulmit, on the outskirts of which the Mir's brother, Shahbaz Khan, had been waiting to receive me.

At 3 a.m. I woke up, and saw the Karakoram hills. They wore a new aspect. There was moonlight; it was the fourth night after the full moon. Moonlight, like a sari, softens angularities and gives rhythm. So in the moonlight the Karakorams too, normally so harsh and forbidding, seemed to put on a smile like a prim schoolmistress who relents to her lover in the night hours.

Passu, Friday, 8 September

We left Gulmit at 9.30. Shahbaz Khan accompanied me as far as the Sassaini glacier. He is the monarch of all he surveys—which means a hundred poverty-stricken mud huts, a polo-ground, a few orchards producing the most delicious apples, apricots, pears and melons and an infinity of stone and rock and barren

mountains, some of which were still bearing remnants of winter snow. But he has about him none of the airs of a Princeling—or Mirling. On the contrary, there is a wholesome, hundred per cent rusticity about him which I liked. I asked him to stay to tea with me; and the four pieces of cake on the table he gobbled up with lightning rapidity. He is an equally voracious smoker; his average was three cigarettes to one of mine. A few puffs, accompanied by a whirr, and the cigarette would be cremated. For a Hunzawal, he is a great traveller. Not only has he visited Kashgar and Yarkand, which many Hunzawals have done, but he, like me, has been to Zanzibar, Kenya and Tanganyika. We therefore exchanged pleasant reminiscences of the places we knew, Pemba, Mombasa, Nairobi and Dar es-Salaam. But while I went to East Africa on the purely secular mission of investigating the grievances of Indian residents, Shahbaz Khan went there on the highly spiritual mission of paying his respects to the Aga Khan. The veneration in which the Aga Khan is held in these parts knows no bounds. Across these valleys and gorges and parris march ponies and mules, laden with thousands of rupees, representing a tithe of every family's income, as tribute to the Aga Khan. But when Jamal Khan becomes Mir things will begin to hum. He, like Aurangzeb, has definite ideas on religion. But I doubt if he will impose jizya on his Maulai subjects!

Compared with yesterday's march from Atabad to Gulmit, today's from Gulmit to Passu was child's play. It was almost the same distance as yesterday's march, but took only three hours against yesterday's five. For one thing there was no parri; and the Sassaini and Passu glaciers gave us little trouble. We did not actually have to go over them but only over the waters rushing out of them. The Sassaini glacier was a tiny affair; I would not have even noticed it if Shahbaz Khan hadn't drawn my attention to it. But very different was the Passu

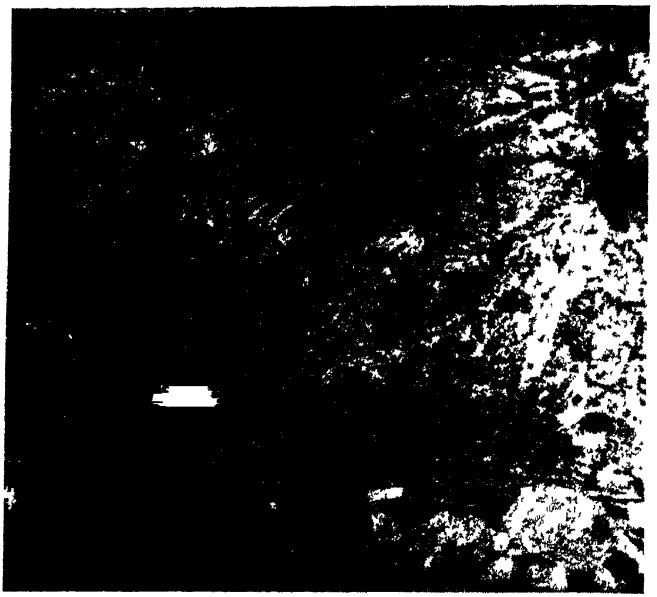
glacier, coming down 25,000 feet from the top of the Karakorams. White and shining it filled the entire valley between two rows of hills near Passu village. It lay there like Hanuman, in the *Ramayana*, who, in order to teach a lesson in humility to Bhima, a giant who used to be inordinately vain of his physical strength, swelled himself up to a monster and lay astride his path. The Passu glacier had come very near the Hunza River but now it has receded and all we had to do was to go over a stream, issuing from it, by means of an ingenious bridge which the local villagers had made.

Just now there was considerable excitement in the verandah; and I went out to see what the matter was. It seems that a Haji, on his way to Khotan, was trying to cross the Passu glacier. His horse tripped and fell and was washed away; and the Haji himself had a narrow escape. I created considerable amusement by my heartless remark that it was strange that this should have happened to a Haji; evidently when he performed the Haj his heart was not sufficiently pure. I knew the Maulais would enjoy a remark of this nature; for with the solitary exception of Jamal Khan they are latitudinarians.

What a delightful village Passu is! The rest-house is situated on a little hillock overlooking the Hunza River. Here the river does not appear so black and grim and sinister as it does from the parris before and after Baltit. Here it spreads itself out pleasantly over a vast sandy bed and looks like the Cauvery by whose banks Anujee and I used to enjoy many a honeymoon camp. But the lambardar of the Passu village tells me that the river is not so innocent as it looks. It often invades the banks and destroys the fields and orchards of the villagers. How laboriously they have planted these orchards! And how neatly and symmetrically they have laid out these fields! I have not seen such devoted agricultural labour anywhere, except in the Szechwan Province in China.

G. C. L. Cric

Rakhaposhi, from Altit north of Baltit



Where Hsuan Tsang lost his elephant

Three Kirghiz maidens

On the other bank of the Hunza River are high hills amongst which is a yawning gap—the Shimshal gorge along which runs the winter route (for in summer, when the rivers are swollen, there is no route at all) to the Shimshal Pass, 15,000 feet high. Nasiro, my Hunza guide, tells me that he had been in that region with that veteran mountaineer and, for many years, the doyen among foreign Consuls in Simla, Mr Visser. When we arrived in Passu the hills were not visible; they were hidden by clouds; but now (7 p.m.) their serrated tops are beginning to appear one after another, inlaid by blocks of ice which the scorching heat of summer has failed to melt, and speckled by the snow which has fallen during the last few days.

Khaibar, Saturday, 9 September

Today I had the unforgettable experience of riding over a glacier—not, as we did yesterday, over the outflow from a glacier, but over the glacier itself. The Batura glacier which we crossed today is one of the largest in the world; it is 24 miles long and 1½ miles broad. Unlike the Sassaini and Passu glaciers it does not stop short of the river; it runs right into it. It did not, however, possess the silvery grace of Sassaini. On the surface it was just a mass of rock and boulders and mud and sand which it had brought down with it from the mountains. While passing over the glacier we felt as if we were traversing a land which had been shaken and torn asunder and turned upside down by some tremendous convulsion of nature. But, every now and then, we could get a glimpse of the stream moving as silently and irresistibly as Fate under the detritus by which it was overlaid. We could see blocks of ice, caves of ice, walls of ice, veritable crystal palaces of ice. And among them we could see deep romantic pools with glassy walls, from which water was dripping like tears.

It took us 1½ hours to cross this glacier, 1½ miles broad. The Mir's yak was waiting at the entrance to the glacier to take me over it. I must confess I did not take kindly to it at first—nor, I suppose, it to me. A great hairy beast with curved horns, it gave me a look of singular hatred through the red-tinted corners of its eyes. And its manners were execrable. It blew like a porpoise; it swayed from side to side; it put out its tongue for most of the time; and saliva oozed from it. Altogether it reminded me of a Brigadier whom I used to know. And yet I had hardly been on the yak for a few seconds when I felt as safe as Shiva on his sacred bull. No more sure-footed animal ever trod this earth. Our ponies followed us, slipping and falling and rising and slipping again; but the yak proceeded with singular unconcern, putting its feet with that deliberation with which a chess-player moves his pawns. One false move, and I would have been in one of those deep romantic pools which I so admired—and dreaded.

The rest of the ride from the Batura glacier to Khaibar was prosaic. We reached Khaibar at 1 30, having left Passu at 8 45. The Haji, whose horse was drowned while crossing the Passu glacier yesterday, has joined my caravan. I felt so sorry for the old man and so caddish for having made a facetious remark at his expense that I gave him Rs. 15 as a help to him in his onward journey.

Gircha, Sunday, 10 *September*

We left Khaibar at 9, crossed over at mile 3 to the right bank of the Hunza River, the left bank of which we had been hugging all along, passed at mile 10 the route leading to Karun Pir Pass, 22,891 feet high, and rode into Gircha village at about 12. Last year this village consisted of 15 houses ; this year, alas ! there are only 5

left standing. The rest were washed away by a flood in July last. Among the casualties was the rest-house.

Today's march was short and easy. Pleasant too—in a negative sense. There were no fierce parris to be traversed, no boulder-strewn glaciers to be crossed. But there was no such lovely scenery to feast our eyes on as in the Gurais or Kishanganga valleys. Gone are the pine-clad hills, bubbling streams, stately chenars and slender willows which made the first part of my trek so idyllic. The country which I have been seeing during the last four days sometimes recalled my childhood fancies of Heaven, but more often those of Hell. Rakhaposhi and the snow-clad glacier-girdled peaks of the Kailas Range are fit abodes for our Gods. The Hunza River, on the other hand, raging and boiling below us, often reminded me of those streams of molten lead into which, so I felt convinced in my childhood, evil-doers who oppressed their fellow men would be hurled after death.

However, to see it all has been a great experience. And the Hunzawals were determined to make me pay for this experience. In fact I am being fleeced right and left. And I am content to be fleeced. These people are so hard up; and I, for the first time in my service, am distinctly well off, for in India I am drawing my almost gubernatorial pay meant for the inflated cost of living in China. Moreover, I like these folk, handsome, hardworking and very friendly. Even when you pass casually through their villages they make you feel that you are their honoured guest. Even the women and children have a smile and a salaam for you. And what lovely children! Jamal Khan's two little girls are cherubs. He has named them, appropriately enough, after the Hyderabad Princesses, Dureshever and Niloufar. And when they grow up there will be discussions, as there are at the dinner tables in Delhi and Simla about the Hyderabad Princesses, as to which type of beauty is more entrancing—the stately and

statuesque beauty of the elder or the mellow, intimate and rather luscious beauty of the younger. . . . But no! I am forgetting that Jamal Khan's girls will shortly go into purdah.

Who are the Hunzawals whom I have come to like so much? I have not had time to delve into their ethnological origins, but from a glance at certain books in the Mir's library at Baltit I gather that they are the descendants of 'the Great Yuehchi' of Chinese history or 'the Indo-Scythians' of Indian history. These people were driven by the Huns in the second century B.C. from the plains north of the T'ien Shan mountains first to Samarkand, then known as Sogdiana, and thence to the Oxus which remained their main seat of power. They even attempted a short-lived conquest of India but were pushed back into the wild fastnesses of the Karakorams by the Shins, an Indian tribe. The Mir himself claims descent from Alexander the Great, who indeed occupied Bactria in 329 B.C. The language spoken in Hunza has no affinities with any other known language in the world; Sir Aurel Stein has described it as 'an erratic block left by some bygone wave of conquest'.

If rest-houses are an index to a people's cleanliness, the Hunzawals must be a clean people, unlike many of their neighbours. The Hunza rest-houses are just huts, with mud walls and mud floors, but they are scrupulously clean. In their bareness and cleanliness they will please Mahatma Gandhi's heart.

Misgar, Monday, 11 *September*

Gircha, which we left at 8.45, was not particularly attractive, except that it commands majestic views of the perpetual snows on Karun Pir. Sost, which we passed at the third mile, seemed a pleasanter and more prosperous village. Here the Chapursan River issuing from the

Hindu Kush joins the Hunza River. We proceeded along the banks of the Hunza River for another seven miles and then left it for good. Without any regrets we saw it going its way. Yet I suppose one should be grateful to that river for providing a passage through the otherwise impassable Karakorams. At about the tenth mile from Gircha we saw the junction of the Misgar River, coming from the Mintaka Pass to the north, and the Khunjerab River, flowing down the weird-looking Khunjerabad gorges to the east. Our track ran along the right bank of the Misgar River until we crossed over to the left by means of a rickety bridge, to repair which orders have been issued by the Mir, none too soon.

Today we had more parris to cross: they were not so terrifying as the ones between Atabad and Gulmit but, in a sense, they were even more dangerous; for they were not carved out of the rock but ran hesitantly on crumbling hills and were covered with loose stone and rock, slippery both for horse and man. One slip would mean a fall of thousands of feet into the Misgar River and a quick return passage to India. At about 1.15 we sighted the green fields of Misgar and heaved a sigh of relief; for I am told there are no more parris to cross, no more crumbling mountains to traverse. And so I bid adieu to Hunza with the words, adapted by Cobb:

Quocumque aspicias nihil est nisi montes et aer.

Today I had a shave, the fourth since leaving Srinagar. The first two were in Gilgit and the third in Baltit. I find that a few days' abstinence from shaving gives me quite a respectable beard. The last occasion when I had a beard of these dimensions was when I had influenza in Bharatpur. But then my beard was almost entirely black. Now, alas, it is black and white.

Grierson told me at the outset of this trip that it was not the fashion to shave on such journeys. Even without shaving, the weather—cold one day and hot the next,

with sultry winds and icy gales—plays havoc with your face. Besides, non-shaving gives you a he-man look. I used to see a number of these self-conscious he-men in the Gurais and Burzil valleys. I saw one of them from Bombay striding into the rest-house at Chillum with a month-old beard, having climbed Nanga Parbat up to 15,000 feet. At Godai I saw three stalwart Sikhs who had walked up to Gilgit, fainted in the Bunji desert on account of heat and thirst and were bent on walking back again. I have no desire to emulate their exploits, to perform double marches or to establish records. Incidentally, Peter Fleming in his *News from Tartary* says that the record for the quickest march from Gilgit to Bandipur was held by Lord Curzon who did it in six days. That record has now been beaten by a clerk in the Gilgit Agency, Liaqat Ali, who covered the distance from Gilgit to Bandipur in three days and two nights. For my own part, I am content to go on and on, walking where I cannot ride, riding where I cannot walk, halting wherever I can find a rest-house or even a mud hut and realizing more and more the truth of the Psalmist's words that 'The Heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork'.

Misgar, Tuesday, 12 September

There is an end-of-the-world feeling about this place. Here is the last telegraph office in India. I shall miss these telegraph poles in my onward journey; I had almost come to regard them as my companions. Perched on dizzy hilltops and planted in abysmal valleys, they often struck me as the only visible links with civilization. And they are the only symbols which show that even in these desolate regions the King's Writ does run. Nobody dare tamper with them, unlike the North-West Frontier where a disgruntled tribesman often vents his wrath against

Government by cutting the telegraph wire. Here it is almost as sacrosanct as the Aga Khan himself.

The last Scouts' Post in India is here too—or almost here, for it is four miles beyond. To the Gilgit Scouts and even more to the Kashmiri Postmaster, who is condemned to live here for a year, Misgar is a penal settlement. To me it was an outpost of civilization. Hardly had I reached Misgar when I received two charming telegrams from Anujee. One had been sent on the day of our great Malabar festival, Onam, the 2nd of September. The other told me of the birth of our grandson of which I had dreamt in Atabad on the very day that it happened.

The news of my becoming a grandfather has spread like wildfire in this village. The lambardar, my camp clerk, orderlies and marakabans came one by one and said 'Mubarik' [1] I gave them all a couple of sheep to rejoice with ; and then they said 'Mubarik' with still greater fervour.

Anujee writes that the boys left for the Doon School on the 6th. How different they are, though twins—one big-boned, sedate, capable of infinite concentration; the other small-made, jovial and impish. Different too are our twin girls from each other. One is straight-haired, classic-featured and hypersensitive; the other has curly hair, crumbled-up features, and an odd charm. Ammini and Kunja, again, are so different in their temperaments. Ammini is almost Victorian in her domesticity. At the age of 17 she discovered a Byronic husband—Byronic in his looks, not in his tastes—and is wrapped up in him. But Kunja is still shunning matrimony: she is succumbing more and more to the lure of China.

Misgar is a place where visitors like to leave some record of their visit. The Chinese Road Reconnaissance Party, headed by Mr Chu, who visited Misgar last year, have scrawled something in artistic Chinese characters

1 Congratulations.

on the walls of one room. In the other room, members of the Citroën-Haardt Expedition have left pictorial mementos of their visit. These include pictures, drawn by themselves, of three members of the expedition, an ibex, apples and pears for which Hunza is famous. And they have written on the walls the following lines in Old French :

> De deberses maineres labores a bestes
> et ausiaus mout richement.

Murkushi, Wednesday, 13 September

Two months ago the Government of India telegraphed to me asking me the strength of my party and the number of ponies I required. I replied, 'Ponies six, companions none'. Actually I have now 19 ponies with me and no lack of companions. Of these 19 ponies eight are carrying petrol for Gillett—16 gallons on each pony. Of the remaining ponies six are riding ponies; and five are carrying my luggage.

My companions hail from all parts of this Frontier. Safdar Ali, who has been deputed by the Political Agent, Gilgit, to accompany me, is a relative of the Mir of Nagar and the Rajah of Gilgit. Nasiro, whom the Mir of Hunza has instructed to guide me through his territory, is a lambardar near Baltit. My bearer, Alif Shah, and cook, Murad Beg, are both Hunzawals; they accompanied Turral up to Kashgar on his way to Urumchi to take up the post of British Consul. Both are good at their jobs, hardworking and cheerful. I have also with me two Turki orderlies whom Gillett has sent to fetch me. One of them, Mohammed Akhun, is a fine type—so straight, physically and mentally, so competent and so hardworking. And then there is Mohamad Qurban, our caravanbashi who wears a black-and-white conical hat, and whenever I meet him, takes it off and waves it in a sweeping circular gesture. He is a Turki and knows no language other than

Turki. He is the undisputed master of his caravan and looks it. Every word, every gesture of his breathes authority. The Czar of all the Russias did not wield so much power as Mohamad Qurban within his own sphere.

About an hour after leaving Misgar we passed the last Scouts' Post in India at Qalandarchi. The Jemadar of the Scouts, who comes from Yasin, met me and deputed a Havildar and six men to see me over the Mintaka. Towards the end of our march of 15 miles we crossed the Killik River which comes from the Killik Pass, the companion, in height and location, of the Mintaka Pass which I am to cross the day after tomorrow.

Today's march was not very different from its predecessors—except that we had fewer parris to traverse. The hills still look as if they are crumbling to pieces. Indeed, on more than one occasion we had to dismount from our ponies and quicken our steps lest the rolling stones should fall on us. Nasiro drew my attention to a spot where, he told me, when Packman[1] was on his way to Kashgar to take up the post of British Consul-General, his pony slipped and fell and was carried away with two of his boxes. All this confirmed that we were still in Hunza—geographically as well as politically.

Gulkhwaja, Thursday, 14 September

The height seems to be affecting me a little. At Misgar we were 10,000 feet above sea level; at Murkushi nearly 12,000 feet; and now we are 14,000 feet above sea level. At Misgar I had a dull headache which developed into a frightful one at Murkushi. Was it the height, I wondered, or was it one of my monthly headaches which Caroe calls my 'female complaint'? The last time I had a headache was while crossing the Tragbal Pass on the 19th of August. So it was about time for this month's course! Or, was the

1 Major Packman, Indian Political Service.

headache due to my exposing my head to the cold winds, especially when riding? Anyhow, I took out my Balaclava cap this morning and put it on and felt much better. 'I must be looking very funny in this Balaclava with a hat on top of it,' I told Safdar Ali. 'Yes, Sir,' replied Safdar Ali, who always agrees with me, 'you look very funny.'

Today's march of nine miles was quite pleasant—for me, not for my horse. As there were no parris I could ride all the way; but the path was boulder-strewn and very rough. However, the country seems to be opening out. While approaching Gulkhwaja we obtained a view of the Gulkhwaja glacier. Between two hills it looked, from a distance, like one of those enormous white pigs which the Fathers in the Catholic Seminary, Kandy, loved—and loved to show to their visitors. And at its snout was a rock shelter in which I was to pass the night. Ten feet by 12 feet, with an entrance 3 feet by 2 feet (from which the door had been removed), a mud floor and a roof supported by loose twigs and rocks which looked as if they might fall down, this hut was, on our arrival, in the happy possession of a shepherd. Quickly he and his sheep and straw and firewood were cleared out; and thus the Agent-General for India in China found accommodation for his last night in India before crossing over into China.

The end-of-the-world feeling which I had in Misgar was reinforced by our subsequent marches. We did not come across a single village between Misgar and Murkushi, or Murkushi and Gulkhwaja. Nor did we see any human beings other than an old shepherd, looking after the sheep which the Misgar citizens had sent up-country for grazing in the summer. This evening, from the verandah of my hut, I saw a flock of about 500 sheep returning after the day's grazing to their pen, adjoining my hut. How alert they looked and how interested in their surroundings as compared with our ponies who were standing close by in deathly stillness, not even revealing whether

they were awake or asleep! As the sheep settled down in their pen, which was barely large enough to hold them all, the stronger, as among human beings, pushed the weaker to the wall, and the males—again, as among human beings—appropriated the more eminent places, the rocks in the pen. I saw little shepherd boys running about and picking out the ewes and producing them before the chief shepherd and his assistants to be milked. 'What a fine flock!', I exclaimed. 'Pshaw,' said my Turki orderly, 'wait till we cross into *my* country tomorrow when you will see real sheep.'

The night I spent in Gulkhwaja was the coldest I have ever experienced, and it was the highest spot I have ever touched. In the middle of the night I felt some difficulty in breathing. I was all right if I lay absolutely still; but if I moved, even to gather my blankets, I felt uneasy. I tried not to take any notice of it by thinking of things outside myself. I listened with concentration to the flow of the stream which issued from the mouth of the Gulkhwaja glacier. I listened to the wind, which rose suddenly and equally suddenly subsided. I thought of our mythological figures—Hanuman, the son of the Wind-god and his companionship with Rama and the defeat of Ravana and the restoration of Sita and her subsequent exile and the manner in which my mother used to read it all out to us until tears welled up in our eyes out of sympathy for Sita. And thus I relapsed into mythology, childhood—and sleep.

CHAPTER III

THE ROOF OF THE WORLD

Lupgaz, Friday, 15 *September*

No wonder I felt cold last night, for this morning when I woke up I found that it had been snowing. All the hills in the vicinity and my own hut and the sheep in the adjoining pen were covered with snow. For a few minutes I had the same emotion of delight as I experienced when I saw snow for the first time in Ilkley, Yorkshire, on New Year's Eve, 1919. But now this delight was marred by the thought that in crossing the Mintaka Pass snow was likely to prove a nuisance.

We could not leave Gulkhwaja till about midday on account of a romance among horses. As there was no fodder in Gulkhwaja it was decided to let the ponies loose in the night for grazing in the neighbourhood. All our nineteen ponies were males; but a local Delilah enticed the whole lot of them to her own jungle in Murkushi. In the morning search parties had to be sent; and the delinquents returned shamefaced to Gulkhwaja at about noon.

We rode along the edge of the Gulkhwaja glacier for about a mile and a half. Then we climbed steeply for a mile or two and, before we knew where we were, found ourselves on the top of the Mintaka Pass, 15,450 feet high. From 'the Pass of the Thousand Ibex'—for that is what Mintaka means in the local language—I had hoped to see extensive vistas of the Hindu Kush to the west, the Himalayas and the Karakorams to the south and the Pamirs to the north; but last night's sudden change of weather spoiled it all. Yesterday the sky was blue as blue could be; there was not even a suspicion of a cloud; and the sun was shining brilliantly. But today, what with the

snow and fog and mist, everything was white and grey with black boulders jutting from the hills and the rest white with snow. One object stood out, a dak-runner's shelter on the very top of the Pass, on the very line which separates India from China. When I stood at this Great Divide with one foot in India and the other in China a wave of thankfulness surged up in my heart that I should have been chosen to represent my country in another, as great and ancient as mine, and to do what little I could to cement the friendship between them.

From the top of the Mintaka Pass we walked down, or rather slid down, into a delightful valley. By about 2.30 we reached our destination, Lupgaz, covered with snow. Lupgaz is apparently a mere geographical expression. There is no village here nor any sign of life except a seventy-year-old shepherd who lives in an akoi. Next to his akoi was my own. An akoi may be described as a circular tent, about 8 feet in diameter, made up of a number of numdahs, or woollen rugs, sewn together. Thanks to the shepherd who flung additional numdahs on and into my tent to make it wind-proof and damp-proof, I slept as comfortably in this akoi as I used to in 'The Castle', Fort Sandeman, with its heavy curtains, spring beds and Persian carpets.

The septuagenarian shepherd was the first inhabitant of Sarikol I met. He produced a jugful of the most delicious cream. His wife, who is considerably younger than himself and has recently presented him with a child, also busied herself making *roti* for my servants and others. The shepherd then produced a sheep—a real sheep, as my orderly would call it—as nazar. I was inclined just to touch it as a token of acceptance and let it go as I used to do when the Zhob maliks presented me with sheep while on tour; but my orderlies said I must accept the sheep. 'This shepherd is an Amir', they said enviously, 'and he will feel hurt if you do not accept it.' An Amir indeed is he; for towards the evening we saw that he had several

hundred sheep and yak which he was free to graze on the most extensive grassy grounds below the Mintaka Pass. Having seen these meadows, I can now sympathize with the Mir of Hunza's chagrin at losing his grazing rights in Sarikol.

The fact is that the Great Divide between India and China is in some respects becoming greater. Until recently, the men of Hunza could go as far as Kashgar, taking with them apples and dried apricots and bringing back rugs and numdahs, on radharis[1] issued by the Political Agent, Gilgit. Now they cannot cross the Mintaka unless they have regular passports viséd by the Chinese Consul-General in Calcutta. We too on our part have tightened up our Frontier Crossing Regulations. It is unfortunate but, I suppose, inevitable that the more friendly nations become, the more formal they have to be too.

Payik, Saturday, 16 *September*

Today I did something which I had thought I should never do—a double march. Instead of halting at Mintaka Karaul or Mintaka Agazi, 'the mouth of the Mintaka', I pushed on to Payik, 27 miles from Lupgaz. I did this double march for the sheer joy of it. It was the best way in which I could give expression to my sense of relief at escaping from the weird Hunza gorges. On this side of the Mintaka the whole atmosphere is different from that on the Indian side; it is cleaner, fresher, more open. To come into the grasslands of Sarikol after the crumbling hills and fearful parris of Hunza is like reading *As You Like It* after Marlowe's *Tamurlane.* Hills indeed there are; but they do not look so grim and sinister as the Karakorams. Streams there are too—but blue smiling streams, so different from the muddy rivers of Hunza and Astor.

[1] Permits.

I stopped for about an hour in the Chinese Military Outpost at Mintaka Karaul. The Jamadar of the Post, accompanied by the Havildar, rode out a couple of miles to meet me and entertained me in his room. Straightaway I was plunged into that Chinese atmosphere which I have learnt to love. Boiling tea (for which I had often longed at the end of those tedious marches in Hunza), hot wet towels, the photograph of President Chiang Kai-shek looking considerably younger than himself, bowings, ceremonies and polite conversation, all took me back—and forward—to Chungking. Today, however, there was not much scope for conversation. The Jamadar, a Chinese from Kansu, would say something in Chinese which his Havildar, a Turki, would translate in Turki to my orderly who would then translate it to me in Urdu; and my reply in Urdu would go through similar channels in the reverse direction.

How self-respecting and ceremonious even the average man is in China! On reaching Payik, I gave a small present to the Chinese sepoy who escorted me from Mintaka Karaul. He not only would not accept it, but much to the surprise of my Hunza servants gave quite a lively discourse on the friendship between China, India and Britain and the inappropriateness of his accepting a reward for the small service he had done to the representative of the Government of India. Similarly, I had considerable difficulty in getting the Sarikol shepherd, who presented me with a superb sheep last night, to accept the 350 kochins[1] which I gave him. How a Hunzawal lambardar would have grabbed it and almost demanded it! But the Hunzawals are poor and the Sarikolis are not, for the good earth is theirs for grazing.

Today we passed nearest to the spot 'where Three Empires meet'—or used to, before two of them became Republics. How Caroe would have loved to see all this!

1 Kochin or Sinkiang dollar—5 Chinese Central Government dollars.

The Frontiers are his hobby; and the more they aspire to the delectable mountains the greater his delight. My own interest in the subject was first roused on reading Lord Curzon's brilliant Romanes lecture at Oxford on 'Frontiers'. I then little dreamt that I, a Southerner, would one day have to deal with our Northern Frontier. I remember Metcalfe[1] asking me, on the eve of my appointment as Political Agent, Zhob, 'Do you think you will be able to put it across to the Pathans?' I think I did succeed in doing so, and when my term in the Zhob was over, I was pleased to get a letter from Parsons[2] saying that I had left the Zhob a better place than I found it.

We were now within a stone's throw of the Russian Pamirs and Afghan Wakhwan. The track to the Killik Pass and thence to Afghanistan and Russia turned off to the west at Mintaka Karaul. We were near the abode of *Ovis Poli* which was originally discovered by Marco Polo in 1256. How vivid and dateless is his description: 'There are great numbers of wild beasts, among others wild sheep of great size, whose horns are good 6 palms in length. . . . This plain is called Pamir; and you ride across it for 12 days together, finding nothing but desert, without habitation or any green thing so that trackers are obliged to carry with them whatsoever they have need of.' The Venetians used to jeer at Marco Polo as 'the Millioni', for they thought that his accounts of China and its wealth, which he reckoned in millions, were a gross exaggeration. But he certainly did not exaggerate the length of the horns of *Ovis Poli*; for the horns which Cobb has recently sent to Lord Wavell are 'good 6 palms in length'.

We reached Payik at 3.30, having left Lupgaz at 9.30 and spent an hour in the Chinese outpost in Mintaka Karaul and half an hour by the wayside for lunch. I had as cordial a reception in Payik as in Mintaka Karaul. The officer

[1] Sir Aubrey Metcalfe, late Foreign Secretary to the Government of India.

[2] Sir Arthur Parsons, Agent to the Governor General, Baluchistan.

ı charge of this Police Station, a Turki, accommodated ıe in an akoi, which was almost palatial as compared ith the one I slept in last night, and presented me with ıat delicacy of delicacies, which I had not enjoyed since left Baluchistan, chikor. And I, in return, gave him a tin f cigarettes and a little iodex to be rubbed on a delicate rgan of his which he told me had a tendency to get vollen when he rode.

Later, 10 *p.m.* I have just been told that the chikor, hich I enjoyed for dinner, was a pet of the Police Officer's ttle daughter and that she wept over it. I was furious ith my servants for not having told me that it was a pet, ut they said they themselves did not know until it had en killed. I felt very very unhappy about it.

afdar, Sunday, 17 September

It is the 17th of September today. This day last month was sailing down the Jhelum to Bandipur. And this ıy last year at this time (2 p.m.) Anujee, Kunja and I, :ompanied by Govindan Nair, my faithful Assistant, ere over the Hump *en route* to Chungking. How far ıd how much I have roamed about during this period! nujee believes in astrology (I do not disbelieve it myself) ıd attributes my wanderings—especially my wanderings ithout her!—to the malign influence of Saturn who is the ascendant in my life at present. But Anujee also :lieves in prayer (I do not disbelieve in it either) and per- ıps her prayers have converted Saturn, so far as I am ıncerned, from a malign into a benign planet. For I am ıjoying this trip immensely—especially this part of the ip. It is good to feel that you are on the Roof of the orld. This plateau has an average height of 12,000 feet; ıd from here one thinks contemptuously of the mere 000 feet of Simla, even as Simla looks down upon the 000 of Solon and the 3,000 of Mount Abu. Here one

feels at home with Nature, which one does not in the Karakoram region. Here, too, there are high mountains rising to 20,000 feet; but we are ourselves so high up on the earth's surface that to us their height is not appalling. And the rivers, crystal-clear, are streams of Paradise.

We left Payik at about 10. Before leaving Payik I took care to placate the Police Officer's little daughter, whom I had so cruelly, albeit unwittingly, deprived of her pet, with a tin of jam. I liked her and her father, a Turki with the most affable manners; and her mother, the first Turki woman I have met, made tea for us, smoked, spat, whistled and sang snatches of songs.

I rode all the 23 miles from Payik to Dafdar—and did so with pleasure. I am almost beginning to enjoy riding. We rode eastwards along the Karachukar darya to Ujadbai, noted for the 'Maiden's Castle', to the spot where it joins the Tashkurghan River. At Ujadbai we turned due north and followed the course of that river. To our left was the Sarikol Range and beyond it inscrutable Russia. And to our right were the Taghdumbash Pamirs. Firm, smooth, rounded, the Pamirs, so unlike the gaunt Karakorams, reminded me of the exquisite modelling of women's breasts in the Ellora and Ajanta caves and the equally exquisite descriptions, based on this resemblance, in our classical poetry.

Much to my regret I could not spot the 'Maiden's Castle' in Ujadbai. I would have liked to see it, for Hsuan Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim who returned to China from India via the Pamirs, saw this fortress in A.D. 642. He has related the legend attached to this fortress. A Chinese Princess of the Han dynasty was betrothed to the King of Iran. While she was being escorted to the home of her fiancé from Peking, she was waylaid by robbers. She, however, escaped from their clutches and was placed by her faithful escort on an isolated hill near Ujadbai. There she remained in a fortress— the 'Maiden's

Castle'. While in this fortress, the Sun-god visited her; and the Princess became *enceinte*. Awed by this miracle, the people of Sarikol begged her to stay on and rule over them. And thus the Chiefs of Sarikol were descended from the sun.

Many of our Indian Princes too are descended from the sun and the moon.

Kurram, Monday, 18 *September*

Last night was the cosiest I have spent since leaving Srinagar (barring of course the three delightful nights in Gilgit). I was accommodated in the Chinese Fort at Dafdar in a room which had a stove and was delightfully, and occasionally oppressively, warm. The Officer Commanding the Fort vacated his own bedroom for me, despite my remonstrances. It is on such occasions that one feels like exclaiming, like Satan before the Angel, 'How awful goodness is!'

My room was next to the O.C.'s in which he worked and slept; in fact it was only through his room that I could get into or out of my own. A suspicious Press correspondent in Chungking would say that this was the Chinese way of keeping a watch on foreigners and preventing them from having undesirable contacts. If that is so, I can only say that it is the sort of thing that blesseth him that gives and him that takes.

Round about Dafdar I saw some strips of cultivation —the first since leaving Misgar. The Roof of the World, ideal for grazing or riding, is not suited for cultivation; it is too cold. We are still on the Roof of the World, but are gradually descending. At Lupgaz we were 14,500 feet above sea level; at Mintaka Karaul, 13,000 feet; at Payik, 12,700; at Dafdar, 11,530; and tomorrow, at Tashkurghan, we shall go down to 10,225 feet. Still we shall be higher than the highest hill station in India.

There is only one thing about the Roof of the World which makes you feel uncomfortable. In the Pamir region there blows an incessant wind, cold, bitter, biting. Compared to these icy gales, the cold winds of the Zhob, against which in the winter we used to seal our windows in the Castle with felt, are but zephyrs. During the last few days I have been wearing every woollen garment I could lay my hands on including the Balaclava cap in which, Safdar Ali agreed, I looked so funny; but it is difficult to protect the face and hands. When Safdar Ali joined me at Gilgit on the 1st of this month he was quite a handsome youth; now he looks a wizened old man with cracked lips, red nose and black cheeks. My own face has not suffered so much; it even escaped an attack of smallpox in Abbottabad; it is the kind of face which can't get worse! But my hands are looking terrible. I cannot ride with gloves on—at any rate the kind of gloves I have; and at the end of every day's ride my fingers get black and blue and bulging. But in the night I restore them to some sort of human shape by rubbing in lanoline with which the Jacksons so thoughtfully provided me in Gilgit. This tube of lanoline, by the way, is part of the enormous quantity of drugs and stores left behind by the German expedition to Nanga Parbat in 1937.

We left Dafdar this morning and got to Kurram, some 14 miles away, soon after midday. Between Dafdar and Kurram the Tashkurghan River, along whose banks we rode, makes a series of graceful curves, rippling over small white rocks and pebbles which look as if they had been taken out, washed one by one and put back into the river. All the way the bottom of the river could be seen; the water was so clear. And how beautifully blue! Blue with a dash of green like the eyes of Scarlett O'Hara.

I am being fully escorted on this trip. An armed Chinese sepoy was deputed to accompany me from Mintaka Karaul to Payik; an armed policeman from Payik to

Dafdar; and two armed Chinese sepoys from Dafdar to Kurram. Moreover, the Tajik lambardar of this area, a fine figure of a man, with deep-set eyes, an aquiline nose and a face and beard like Aurangzeb's, has accompanied me. Thus, escorted by Chinese sepoys, Turki orderlies, Tajik lambardars, Kirghiz attendants and Hunza servants, I, a solitary Hindu among two dozen Muslims, am moving up Sarikol. But the fact that I am a Hindu does not count; it did not count for one minute in any part of those cent per cent Muslim areas which I passed through since leaving Srinagar. All that counts is that I am an Indian and the representative of the Government of India.

Tashkurghan, Tuesday, 19 September

Kurram, where we spent last night, is, like Lupgaz, only a geographical expression. Its population consists of three or four Sarikol shepherds; and its habitation consists of two akois. Last evening, however, Kurram hummed with life. With our arrival—we were about two dozen including the caravanbashi's men—Kurram's population went up as rapidly as New Delhi's with the arrival of Americans during the war. And the number of its houses was doubled. Two more akois were pitched, one for myself and one for my servants. My akoi was full of holes; and one of them was large enough to let me see the Seven Sages or, as Westerners less respectfully call them, the Little Bear. We, however, lit a towering fire in our akoi and thus kept ourselves warm.

Today's march from Kurram to Tashkurghan was the only one which fell short of the pleasure which we expected, and derived, from our rides on the Roof of the World. My back was aching; my pony was weak (I discovered that it did not have sufficient grain during the last three days); it was hot and there was a fierce glare. Moreover, the Tashkurghan River which had been our

smiling companion went on receding to the right until it looked like a blue cord at the foot of the Pamirs. The Pamirs themselves had shrunk and there was no snow on them. Above all, there was a vast and seemingly interminable stony tract on which we could neither walk ourselves nor trot our horses. The result was that we took 5½ hours to cover the 18 miles from Kurram and I arrived with a splitting backache in Tashkurghan, where all the local officers including the Hsien Chang[1] had ridden out to welcome me.

With my arrival in Tashkurghan I have completed the third stage of my journey to Kashgar—or, rather, to Yangihissar where Gillett will meet me on the 30th of September. The first stage ended at Gilgit on the 29th of August and the second at Misgar on the 11th of September. The third was the most delightful. The first might have competed with it but for the dry, hot and arid region between Mushkin and Pratab Pul. In the second stage one felt one was in hostile surroundings. Man was indeed friendly—no one could have been friendlier than the Mir of Hunza—but Nature, represented by the Karakorams and the Hunza gorges, was red in tooth and claw. In the third stage, on the Roof of the World, Nature and man are perfectly attuned to each other. Both are merged in the infinite. Here at the sight of these meadows 'apparell'd in celestial light' Wordsworth would have got not only intimations but convictions of Immortality.

I like the people of Sarikol too, though there do not seem to be many of them. Sarikol is sparsely populated, unlike Hunza where children seem to sprout from every inch of habitable land. The few Sarikolis I have seen are tall upstanding men with hawklike features, dwarfing their Chinese masters. They are very well-off too. Their wealth consists of goats and sheep, and particularly yaks. On them they depend for their food, milk, clothing and

[1] District Magistrate.

shelter. I shall never forget the delicious bowls of milk and cream and curds which were produced before me, wherever I camped in Sarikol. The curds here are far more delicious than in Travancore, where too it is an article of daily diet. But the cattle in Travancore are underfed and ill-nourished. Travancore boasts of the highest literacy in India; but the people are too 'educated' to have any real sympathy with animals. They have more sympathy with bicycles.

Tashkurghan, Wednesday, 20 September

I have been in Tashkurghan for twenty-four hours, but I have seen nothing of it except my mud-walled, mud-floored, mud-roofed room in a little building occupied by a Chinese, who supervises the arrangements for exchanging the Consular mail to and from Kashgar. On my arrival in Tashkurghan my backache became an agonizing pain. I rubbed in some Elliman's embrocation and took to bed with a hot-water bottle, wondering whether this was due to exposure or excessive riding or straining of a muscle.

While writing this diary I was happily interrupted by the arrival of the Consular mail from Kashgar. It brought me some fresh greenery from Gillett—fruits and vegetables and a gorgeous melon, the like of which I have not seen or tasted even in Hindubagh. Gillett has also written to me some news of the wide world. American troops are inside Germany north of Trier; British troops are 10 miles from Germany in Holland; Mr Churchill and Mr Roosevelt are conferring again; a Rumanian armistice is being signed; Hungary is out; and Allied air superiority over the Moluccas is well established.

In the little world of Sinkiang, too, things have been happening. The Tupan, Sheng Shih-ts'ai, has resigned; the Tupanship has been abolished and Sinkiang, like any

other Province in China, is to have a Governor, appointed by the Central Government. The resignation of the Tupan is indeed a sensational event. The great Sheng Shih-ts'ai who lorded it over Sinkiang for ten years; who quelled a rebellion of his Tungan subjects with Soviet assistance and then continued to rule over Sinkiang with Soviet 'advice'; who, with the withdrawal of Russia from Sinkiang last year, went clean over to the Kuomintang fold; who abjured his 'Six Great Principles of Government' and affirmed his undivided allegiance to the 'Three People's Principles'—this Sheng Shih-ts'ai is now gone.

> Methinks it should be now a huge eclipse
> Of sun and moon, and that the affrighted globe
> Should yawn at alteration.

But there has been no eclipse. On the contrary 'the white sun[1] in the blue sky' promises to shine on Sinkiang with greater brilliance than ever before. Only, the brocade which I have brought for Madame Sheng Shih-ts'ai will now go to some other lady!

Tashkurghan, Thursday, 21 September

I am feeling a little better today—but only a little. The most I can bend is 10 degrees against yesterday's 5. I have therefore decided to stay on in Tashkurghan for another day, hoping that Saturn (who, according to Anujee, may be giving me these little pinpricks) will, in answer to her prayers, relent and let me go forward on Saturday.

How quickly one gets tired of staying in bed! For the last forty-eight hours I have been seeing the same objects over and over again through the only opening in my room —the brats of the occupant of the neighbouring room who, in their regular gradation, reminded me of my own as they were ten years ago; my neighbour's fowls shaking their heads and trying to come in; a couple of timorous

[1] The National Flag of China.

puppies; a more self-possessed cat wondering whether she would be welcome in my room and deciding that she would not; the outline of a bare mountain in the distance, and above it 'that little tent of blue' which prisoners and invalids call the sky. I am getting a little tired of them all and have therefore taken refuge in books—books which I shunned when Nature was so glorious—the books of Sir Aurel Stein.

I am glad I am reading Stein's books just in time to realize the great antiquity of the place I am staying—or lying—in. Tashkurghan, which literally means Stone Fort, has apparently been the capital of Sarikol from time immemorial. Ptolemy refers to it as the extreme western emporium of Serica. Serica, which means silk-country, was the name by which China was known to the Roman Empire.

What interested me most was that the two great Chinese pilgrims, Fa-hsien and Hsuan Tsang, whose names have been familiar to me, as to every Indian schoolboy, from childhood, and to whom we are indebted for detailed information regarding some of the most illustrious periods in Indian history, visited Tashkurghan, though they adopted different routes. About A.D. 400 Fa-hsien marched through Khotan and Karghalik to Tashkurghan, whence he turned northwards to Kashgar to rejoin some companions before attempting the passage of the Pamirs. Hsuan Tsang visited Tashkurghan in the summer of A.D. 642 on his return to China, laden with Buddhist scriptures which he had collected in India. He spent about three weeks in the Kingdom of Sarikol of which Tashkurghan was the capital. The people of Sarikol appear to have impressed him unfavourably. 'They are naturally uncouth and impetuous, though bold and courageous. Their appearance is common and revolting; their clothes are made of woollen stuffs.' Yet, says Hsuan Tsang, 'they know how to express themselves sincerely and greatly reverence the law of Buddha'.

The Kings of Sarikol were followers of Buddhism. Hsuan Tsang says that King Asoka built a stupa in the very centre of this town. Even more celebrated than this stupa was a convent, with large towers and pavilions, which he built in honour of a venerable Buddhist monk, Kumaralabdha, a native of Taxila, who came and preached in and around Tashkurghan. Hsuan Tsang records in detail the spiritual qualities of Kumaralabdha who was as renowned a teacher in the north as Asvaghosha in the east, Deva in the south and Nagarjuna in the west. This shows, says Stein, that 'even little Sarikol, in its Alpine isolation, could boast of a tradition, connecting one of its convents with a great luminary of the Buddhist Church in India'. But today nothing is left of that stupa or convent or Buddhism itself; and instead of the chants of Buddhist monks, I hear, morning and evening, when the Flag over the house of the District Magistrate is hoisted or lowered, the sonorous strains of the Chinese National Anthem, San Min Chu I.

Tashkurghan, Friday, 22 September

I am now in the hands of a Chinese doctor, Li. There is no hospital here, but there is someone to look after the soldiers in the Fort. The Officer Commanding told me that he could not guarantee that Dr Li was a good doctor or that his medicines were efficacious; but he could certify that Dr Li was a good man!

Amongst the officials Mr Chang Chao, the Postal Superintendent, was the man I liked best, perhaps because I could get to know him best. He was the only person who could speak English, barring a very friendly Collector of Customs who, however, had picked up his English in a Japanese school—and that was obvious! Mr Chang Chao was a student in the University of Honan, which is now

in Japanese hands; and he was a teacher at Loyang, one of the ancient capitals of China, which too has recently been captured by the Japanese. He studied physics, but is more interested in philosophy and history. It was a pleasure to hear him talk on the great Buddhist sculptures in Lung Men. He has also dabbled a little in Indian philosophy. He said that Mahatma Gandhi's conception of Truth or Satya closely approximated to the Chinese conception of *Chun*. So also the Indian conception of love resembled the Chinese conception of *Jen*. The great Chinese exponent of the doctrine of *Jen* was Meitze. Meitze, said Chang Chao, was President Chiang Kai-shek's favourite author; he always carried a book of Meitze with him; and his speeches and writings were replete with quotations therefrom.

Yang Chih-k'uei, the District Magistrate, entertained us to dinner. At the outset he expressed his regret that in these hilly tracts where one could obtain nothing, he could only give me a poor meal. But the poor meal consisted of some 30 courses. One course followed another, each more delicious than the last, embracing the inside and outside of a variety of birds and animals and cunningly mixed with sauces. It took us 2½ hours to get through this meal.

Thirty courses and 2½ hours for a meal! But this comes well from the Chinese who retain thousands of characters in their language and before whom Time, that old gypsy man, must himself stop for a while and do homage.

Tashkurghan, Saturday, 23 September

I had proposed to spend only one day in Tashkurghan; I am constrained to spend five. Man proposes and Saturn disposes. Whether I am well or not I must resume my journey tomorrow. Gillett must be fretting and fuming

at this further delay in my arrival which is holding up his own tours.

One of the joys of one's stay in China is that every now and then one comes up against some obscure official who is a real scholar. Chang Chao brought into my room one Yang Yung-t'ang whom he introduced to me as 'Secretary to the Local Government' and, what is more important, a keen student of philosophy. Yang and I had an interesting talk. We talked of God and Shang Ti (the Supreme Ancestor) and the Son of Heaven and Karma and the Transmigration of Souls. Our talk merely reinforced my feeling that in religious matters the Chinese and Indians stood at opposite poles; they, unlike Indians, had little concern with the other world. I admired, however, the manner in which, in two or three sentences, Yang summarized the views of the different philosophers who flourished in the fifth century B.C. In China, as in Greece, that century was a period of great intellectual speculation. But while every cultured Indian knows something about Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, he knows nothing of 'the Hundred Schools of Philosophy' which flourished in China at the same time as the classical schools in Greece and pursued with equal avidity and vigour the fundamental problems of man and society.

I was specially interested in Yang's views on Meitze. Meitze, he said, preached the gospel of universal love. It seemed to me that his teachings bore a striking resemblance to those of Christ. I asked Yang whether that was so. He said, yes, there was a great likeness between the teachings of Meitze and the religion of Christ—not, he added, Christianity. Yang went on to observe that like Christ, and unlike Confucius, Meitze declined to concern himself with politics. I then asked him how it was that so eminent a politician as President Chiang Kai-shek was so ardent a reader of Meitze who abjured politics altogether. Because, said Yang, the President was not a mere politician

Moreover, even a politician's first concern must be to develop his mind and heart; and for this there was no better guide than Meitze. And the best way a statesman could influence his fellow men was by perfecting himself as a man. I thought of Milton's saying that he who wanted to write great poetry must himself be a poem. But how many poets or statesmen are there who come anywhere near this ideal?

CHAPTER IV

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF HSUAN TSANG

Darshat, Sunday, 24 September

At Tashkurghan there were two routes open to me, one which was followed by Marco Polo in A.D. 1256 and the other by Hsuan Tsang in A.D. 642. The former runs close to the border of Russia, past the narrow defile of the Gez River and then north-east towards Kashgar. The latter runs throughout in a north-easterly direction, traversing three high passes and a number of valleys, and debouches in the great plain of Central Asia at Yangihissar. I am glad mine is the latter route; and it thrills me to think that I shall now be walking in the footsteps of Hsuan Tsang.

We left Tashkurghan at 11. All the local officers rode out with me to a village called Tiznap. They were all on horseback; and I was in a doli, carried by four Tajiks. It was a strange procession which Tashkurghan witnessed this morning. The District Magistrate led the way with his dachshund; behind him were the Police and Military officers; behind them was I, a grown-up man, weighing 160 pounds, in a kind of children's cot, carried by four men; on either side of me were two armed constables; behind me were the Postal and Customs officers; and then came the riff-raff, the peons and orderlies and servants and sightseers.

We all alighted in Tiznap where we were entertained to tea, curds, nuts and dried fruit by the villagers. From there we had a beautiful view of Muztagh Ata, 'The Father of Ice Mountains', 24,383 feet high. It is crowned by a

dome of ice which, says Hsuan Tsang, the people took to be a miraculous stupa. The Father of Ice Mountains is indeed well named. There is something fatherly and benign about it as compared with other peaks of more or less equal height. It does not strike terror into your hearts like His perpendicular Majesty, Rakhaposhi. The poet, the lover and the madman would imagine Rakhaposhi as the fit abode of Shiva, in his destructive aspect, or Jehovah, the God of Judgement; but Muztagh Ata would be a more suitable dwelling-place for Allah, the Most Merciful and the Most Compassionate, and Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name!

Tarbashi, Monday, 25 September

'In this, both during summer and winter, there fall down piles of snow; cold winds and icy storms rage. The ground, impregnated with salt, produces no crops; there are no trees; and nothing but scrubby underwood. Even at the time of the great heat the wind and the snow continue. Scarcely have travellers entered this region when they find themselves surrounded by vapour from the snow. Merchant caravans, in coming and going, suffer severely in these difficult and dangerous spots.'

Such is Hsuan Tsang's description of the Chichkillik Pass which he crossed on his return journey to China in A.D. 642 and which we crossed today. But from us the Chichkillik Pass withheld its terrors. We could not have struck a more perfect day. The sky was one vast expanse of blue. The wind was gentle—cold enough to enable us to realize what 'the icy storms' encountered by Hsuan Tsang must have been like, but not cold enough to be too uncomfortable. And the sun was shining brilliantly. From Darshat to the top of the nullah, in which the water was frozen in most places, was a long and gruelling two hours' climb. Then we rode to the top of the Kokminak

Pass, 15,400 feet high, by a gentle gradient. The Pass was covered with snow, varying from 6 inches to 18 inches in depth; and on the neighbouring hills snow lay deeper. Then we descended about 1,000 feet to a vast open space, exposed to the winds from all sides, the Chichkillik Plateau. Here we saw dozens of skeletons of donkeys and horses which had perished. Towards the eastern end of the plateau a large pool of water vied in colour with the blue of the sky.

We had lunch by this pool. By that time my backache returned in full fury; and I also had a headache. A couple of our horses got headaches too, and the Turkis let blood out of their heads. I could ride no further and had to do the rest of the journey in a doli. It was a long and dreary descent of some 3,000 feet into Tarbashi. I felt too sick to keep awake; occasionally, when I felt as if the doli-bearers were about to drop me, I woke up. All I saw was rocks and boulders, uninteresting hills, with a gingerly sprinkling of snow, a waterless nullah and some superb sheep and yak.

We reached Tarbashi at 5 p.m. Today's was one of the longest and most unforgettable of my marches. I shall always remember the morning's march as well as the evening's—the morning's for its pleasure, and the evening's for its suffering.

Toilebulung, Tuesday, 26 September

This morning I decided to dispense with the doli and its bearers whom I had engaged in Tashkurghan, though my back was still far from perfect. I hate to be carried by my fellow-men; moreover, these fellow-men did not know how to carry me. They had never done it before. I therefore paid them off. How cheap human labour is in these parts! The District Magistrate of Tashkurghan had fixed the daily wages of a doli-bearer at 8 kochins—

or 4 annas. Yet about 10 miles from Tashkurghan is a country in which a labourer, I suppose, gets almost as high a pay as a Magistrate of Tashkurghan.

I was still unable to ride a pony. I therefore rode from Tarbashi to Toilebulung—fortunately a short march of about 10 miles—on a yak. An ungainly animal, it puffed and panted and grunted and shivered; but all that was mere pretence. High ground or low ground, rough ground or smooth ground, rocky ground or boggy ground are all the same to a yak. 'Pussy-foot'—as Mrs Skrine[1] appropriately called it—never slips.

The march from Tarbashi to Toilebulung was again hallowed by memories of Hsuan Tsang's pilgrimage. Some four miles from Tarbashi there is a narrow, weird-looking valley, known as the Tangitar gorge, with a stream leaping over rocks and boulders, a number of sulphur springs emitting hot vapours, and crumbling hills which remind one of the Hunza gorges and the nether regions. Here Hsuan Tsang and his fellow travellers were attacked by a band of robbers; and the elephant which he had brought all the way from India was drowned. How the old pilgrim must have wept over his precious elephant! Having seen this route, I can now realize the extent of the dangers and hardships which he encountered and the faith which triumphed over them. Now comes back to me, in all its primitive vigour, that Biblical phrase which impressed me when I first heard it thirty years ago in the C.M.S. College, Kottayam, and which I have since often seen used glibly—a faith to move mountains.

Soon after leaving Tarbashi I had a pleasant surprise. The Kashgar Consulate mail-runners were proceeding to Tashkurghan. On seeing me, they alighted from their horses and gave me a packet of letters, which had been re-directed to Kashgar by the External Affairs Department. In it was a letter from Anujee—the first I had received

[1] Wife of C. P. Skrine, formerly British Consul-General, Kashgar.

since leaving India. She has decided to keep back Kunja from her college in China. Perhaps in view of certain 'proposals' she is wise, though I would have had an argument with her on this subject. But, as usual in domestic matters, it wouldn't have made any difference! Besides, we have agreed that the bringing up of the girls is primarily her concern, and of the boys, mine. If they grow up to be like her, I shall have no complaint.

Among the letters I received today was one from Wen Yuan-ning. He was the first Chinese 'intellectual' I met. A product of King's College, Cambridge, he used to be editor of a well-known literary magazine *T'ien Hsia*, was recently a member of the Chinese Goodwill Mission to Great Britain, and is a member of the Legislative Yuan. His wife is charming; she has such delicate fingers that Tagore wrote a poem in their praise. Wen Yuan-ning is devoted to English literature; and the manner in which he keeps up his literary and intellectual interests is most admirable. 'Do you know', he asks in a letter which I have just received, 'what I have read during the last two months? The whole of the Authorized version of the Bible, from cover to cover. Coming to the New Testament after one and a half months' reading of the Old Testament was like stepping from a room dripping with blood to an eighteenth-century drawing-room. One is all thunder and lightning and murder and sublimity; the other is a gentle refreshing shower, bringing peace and health to suffering man. I must say, though, that for beauty of language, there is nothing in the New Testament to equal the majesty and grandeur of style of chapters 38-41 of Job, the last chapter of Ecclesiastes, the last three chapters of Proverbs, some of the Psalms (No. 23, Nos. 102-104, etc.) and isolated passages in Judges, Samuel, Chronicles and Kings, and the whole of Isaiah.'

Chihil Gumbaz, Wednesday, 27 September

Yesterday, for the first time after a fortnight we were below 10,000 feet. Still we were higher than almost any hill station in India, for Toilebulung was 9,650 feet above seal evel.

At Toilebulung we were already beginning to realize the advantages and disadvantages of a lower elevation than five figures. The disadvantages were symbolized by a solitary fly which I saw in my akoi after leaving Misgar. It reminded me of the swarms of its kind which prevented me from snatching even a few minutes' afternoon rest in that dreary Mushkin-Bunji region through which I was passing this time last month. The advantages of a lower elevation were represented by the lovely log fire which we had last night. What would we not have paid for such a fire during those cold evenings on the Roof of the World! But there were no jungles on the Roof of the World; only grazing land. All we could get for firewood was a kind of grass which caught fire quickly, produced a lot of smoke and burnt itself out equally quickly—an appropriate simile, in the perspective of time, for Nazi Germany.

Last night I also decided to discard my Balaclava cap. But this morning I discovered that it was too soon to do so. We had more climbing to do, more Passes to cross. After leaving Toilebulung, we rode steadily and afterwards steeply up a nullah to the summit of the Tor Art Pass, 13,340 feet high. From that spur we obtained glorious views of the deep valleys on both sides, the paths zigzagging down to Toilebulung on one side, and Chihil Gumbaz on the other, the distant snowy ranges and the Chichkillik plateau. We then rode down for an hour, the riders of the yaks (including myself) remaining in their seats, and the riders on the less sure-footed ponies dismounting in places, to Chihil Gumbaz, a Kirghiz grazing ground.

On our way to the top of the Tor Art Pass we saw half a dozen markhor grazing on the dizzy heights above

us. One of the constables pluckily went up the hillside and less skilfully fired a shot, for the markhor got away.

This afternoon I tried to keep myself *au fait* with developments in China by reading the Chungking Central News Agency telegrams which Napier[1] had sent me. The news in which I was most interested was that relating to the attempts to bridge the gulf between the Kuomintang and the Communists. I was pleased to read the statement of Mr H. C. Liang, Minister of Information, that after three months' talk between the Government and the Communist Delegates, 'a partial solution' of the Kuomintang-Communist problem had been reached. This optimistic statement, however, did not tally with the facts which he gave at the Press Conference. To an outsider it seems strange that the Kuomintang-Communist problem should prove so intractable. But to the Chinese, the intractability of our Hindu-Muslim problem must seem equally strange and even more senseless.

Yalpaktash, Thursday, 28 *September*

Chihil Gumbaz, where I spent last night, was the most inhabited spot I have touched since leaving Tashkurghan. There were actually three families there! There were also quite a number of children, one of whom was crying all night. I could hear its young mother trying to put it to sleep with a lullaby. The lullaby could be more appropriately called an 'Allaby', for it consisted of the plaintive repetition of the words 'Allah, Allah, Allah'. But the child must have had the soul of an infidel, for even this divine melody had no effect on it.

Today we had one more Pass to cross—the last Pass, I am assured, on this trip—the Kashkasu, 12,900 feet. The march from Chihil Gumbaz to Yalpaktash was almost a replica of yesterday's—a long nullah, a steep climb to

[1] Major Napier, Secretary to the Agent-General for India in China.

the top of the Pass, a glorious view of the valleys on all sides, and then an equally steep descent into another nullah.

What a procession of Passes we have crossed! The Tragbal, the Burzil, the Mintaka, the Chichkillik, the Tor Art and the Kashkasu. And how different were the crossings! The Tragbal gave me a headache; the sudden rise of some 7,000 feet from Bandipur to the Tragbal Pass was too abrupt. Moreover, the Tragbal did not strike me as much of a Pass: it was one long and weary climb over the edge of a mountain. The Burzil, on the other hand, was every inch a Pass. Starting from wind-swept Burzil Chowki it wound its way through a multitude of hills to its summit, where it widened out into a meadow with Alpine flowers, and then wound its way down to Sardar Kothi. The Mintaka we were destined to cross in snow. From the rock shelter of Gulkhwaja, our highest camp, 14,000 feet high, we rode, with flakes of snow beating against us, up the edge of the Gulkhwaja glacier to the Mintaka which lay deep in snow. Unlike the Tragbal, it caused me no discomfort, except that I was disappointed that the weather prevented me from obtaining a bird's-eye view of the entire Central Asian mountain system, the Hindu Kush, the Pamirs, the Himalayas and the Karakorams. Glorious weather favoured us in crossing the Chichkillik Pass and plateau; but in spite of the brilliant sun the cold was piercing. This, and the skeletons of the numerous animals which had perished there, enabled me to visualize the terrors of this Pass, which Hsuan Tsang had experienced, and which he has so vividly described. And then came, on two successive days, the Tor Art and the Kashkasu, which normally we would have regarded as trying and imposing but which, after the Chichkillik, were an anti-climax.

I am sorry I have no more Passes to cross on this trip.

Pokhtalla, Friday, 29 September

Ahmed Beg, our lambardar, who looked after us in Yalpaktash last night, and is to look after us for the rest of our journey, compels me to revise my impressions of the Kirghiz people in whose area I have been travelling since Darshat. Until I met Ahmed I thought the Kirghiz rather resembled their favourite animal, the yak. Both man and animal are sure-footed, serviceable, and wild-looking. Anujee has a pet theory that if a man is inordinately fond of any object he will begin to look like that object himself. This is certainly true of one of our friends, Salim Ali, the bird-lover and the author of *The Book of Indian Birds*. With him we used to roam about in that wonderful sanctuary for birds, the Ghana in Bharatpur, and ring them; and some of the ringed birds were found as far away as Tashkent and Lake Baikal. Salim Ali is looking more and more like a bird; he makes such sudden gestures and strange sounds while talking.

How different he is from his brother! Bhaiji,[1] as we called his brother, is also a lover of birds, but he is essentially a humanist. If Bhaiji were living in the time of the Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci would have been glad to shake hands with him. Steeped in Muslim culture and yet deeply interested in Hindu art and architecture, well-versed in Persian and Arabic and also in French and German, naturally dignified in his movements and yet fond and capable, at the age of 65, of trekking like a schoolboy, sedate of speech and yet possessing a mellow and, when he speaks of Dr (Mrs) Muthulakshmi Reddi,[2] impish humour —a scholar, collector of first editions, keen photographer, delightful raconteur and a charming friend, Bhaiji is a fine product of that Indian culture which rises gloriously above the Pakistan or Hindu-stan brand. And his wife, Begum Hamid Ali, equally cultured, more vivacious

1 A. Hamid Ali, I.C.S. (Retd.)

2 Once Deputy President of the Madras Legislative Council.

and possessing a greater fluency of pen and tongue and more pronounced views on roses as well as on women's rights, is a perfect complement to her husband.

Ahmed Beg was as efficient, helpful and refined a lambardar as I have come across anywhere in India; and the Kirghiz, who can produce such a man, must be well above the level of the yak. Yesterday he had fixed our camp some three miles above Yalpaktash. We wanted it to be removed to Yalpaktash itself. In the twinkling of an eye, our akois were dismantled, transported and pitched in Yalpaktash. It took them exactly 20 minutes to pitch our akoi, the women working harder than the men. I admired the deftness of their hands in tying the ropes, throwing the namdahs over their heads, sweeping the floor and cleaning the rugs. It was the best akoi I have slept in, wind-proof and cold-proof with no holes in it as in the akois at Kurram and Chihil Gumbaz. I could not see the Seven Sages from my bed, but I slept like a log.

This morning I felt well enough to dispense with my yak and ride my pony—or at any rate to sit on it, for trotting was still painful. For the first time since leaving Tashkurghan, our trek lay through an open maidan, with patches of cultivation, gently and almost imperceptibly sloping towards Pokhtalla. We rode on for a couple of miles beyond Pokhtalla to the Sasasthik nullah where we spent the night in an akoi, surrounded by high hills—favourite haunts, I am told, of markhor. There we saw some pretty Kirghiz girls and some succulent melons beating those we used to enjoy in Hindubagh.

It has been our practice not to shave until we get, or are about to get, to a landmark like Gilgit or Tashkurghan. The next shave was to happen at Ighiz Yar on the 1st of October. But this evening most of my companions suddenly appeared clean-shaven. I wondered why. I

discovered the reason—or, rather, three reasons—namely, the three girls of the house where we were staying. I did not shave myself, but I asked the girls if they would let me photograph them, not so much for their beauty as for their unique and picturesque headdress—a kind of storied turban with its embroidered flaps falling over their ears. Readily and cheerfully they posed for a photograph. Then they went about their household duties, without any self-consciousness and yet interested in the strangers who had suddenly invaded their house. It was a pleasure to see that among these people, who were Muslims, the relations between men and women were as free and easy and wholesome as in Malabar.

Aktalla, Saturday, 30 September

Last night the men, women and animals in our camp seemed to be in high spirits. Dogs barked unceasingly; horses neighed; donkeys brayed; sheep bleated; and yaks grunted. And the men showed forth all their talents to amuse the three Kirghiz graces. Murad Beg sang songs in Burushaski and even gave an exhibition of the Hunza dance; and our Tajik sepoy sang *ghazals* in Turki. The songs in Burushaski were plaintive and melodious; but there was a greater lilt in the *ghazals* which seemed to go down better. One, which was most appreciated, was a dialogue between a sentimental lover and a hard-hearted girl. 'Won't you lift the veil for a second and reveal your moon-face to me?' asks the rapturous lover. 'Of what use will that be to you? Go to the baker', she says, tossing a few coins to him, 'and buy some bread which will be as white and smooth as my face; you will enjoy it better.' The Kirghiz girls laughed uproariously—as if hinting that that was all the reward the singer would get for the pains he had taken to shave prematurely. And in the midst of all this hilarity I heard the cry of Azan

which roused an echo in the heart of the surrounding hills—and nowhere else.

Today's march from Pokhtalla to Aktalla was a monotonous affair. We rode on stony ground, now to the left and now to the right of an ever-lengthening nullah in the midst of hills which did not even have the redeeming grace of snow. Patches of cultivation began to appear; and we saw a number of herds belonging to the Turkis. We are coming to the end of Kirghizstan.

We had planned to go on for another eight miles to a place which sounded like 'Squirrel'; but by 1.30, when we reached Aktalla, I was so tired that we decided to camp there. And I am now installed in the only house here, belonging to a shepherdess. Safdar Ali and I are in one room, in which are all her worldly belongings; and my servants in the other with the shepherdess herself and her little daughter aged 5.

This evening my companions do not seem to be in such a merry mood as yesterday. The shadow of approaching separation seems to have fallen on them already. A journey like this forges a bond between persons, overriding race and position. It is our last night together. Tomorrow we go our respective ways. I shall go off to Khotan with Gillett. Safdar Ali who, according to the Principal of his college at Srinagar, was 'the best athlete of his time' will return to Gilgit to pore over the accounts of the Consul-General, Kashgar, in the office of the Political Agent, Gilgit. My Turki orderlies will be glad—or so I hope—to rejoin their families. The caravanbashi will count the rupees and kochins he has earned and give a much-needed rest to the horses, of which mine was the best to ride and the second best to look at. My Hunza servants, than whom none could have looked after me better, will wend their weary way back to their homes in Baltit over the snow-bound Passes of Chichkillik and Mintaka. And the Tajik constables will go back to

Tashkurghan, singing *ghazals* about the sentimental lover and the heartless girl with even greater feeling after their encounter with the Kirghiz maidens.

Ighiz Yar, Sunday, 1 October

This morning when I woke up at Aktalla, silence reigned in the camp. It was still dark; the stars were shining; and Orion was astride the sky. But before long the camp began to hum with life. Murad Beg lit the fire; Alif Shah brought in the tea; Latif Akhun fetched the baggage ponies and Mohammed Akhun loaded them. And by 8 we left the camp.

About half-way between Aktalla and Ighiz Yar we passed the village which sounds like Squirrel. There we had a pleasant surprise. We saw things which we hadn't seen for weeks—golden fields, apricot trees, hemp plants, an avenue of willows and a solitary poplar. Evidently we had left the land of nomads; we were approaching 'civilization'. And as if to show that civilization has still to defend itself against enemies, external as well as internal, we saw an old Chinese Fort stretching on both sides of the stream, and an iron mine, worked by prisoners who had been brought here from Kashgar.

We have just reached Ighiz Yar and Gillett will be here any moment to drive me over to Yangihissar.

So our last march is done; and the long trek is over. How I regret that it is all over! And yet, when we descended from our last Pass, the Kashkasu, our feeling was one of relief. This was spontaneously expressed by Mohammed Akhun who exclaimed: 'No more Passes, Huzur, no more climbing; we have done with all that.' Yes, but I shall always remember all that. I shall always remember the sublime, though often weird mountain scenery; those peaks—the Nanga Parbat, with its inimitable grace; the Rakhaposhi, with its air of haughty

grandeur; and the Muztagh Ata, with its dome of ice: hose Passes, the Burzil, with its carpet of Alpine flowers; he Mintaka, deep in snow and the Chichkillik, littered vith the skeletons of its victims: those glaciers—the Sassaini, lying like a sheet of silver between two hills; the Passu, which carried away a fellow-traveller's horse, and the Batura, with its mangled surface, its rocks and boulders, nud and sand, and its delicately fashioned mansions of ce: those gorges and parris. and those streams—the Gurais, the Kishanganga, the Burzil and the Tashkurghan —which, even when the hills were harsh and forbidding, seemed to befriend us. I shall remember them all; amongst them, if I ever become a mystic, will lie my 'Isle of Innisfree'; and to them I shall retire, in mind if not in body, for sympathy and solace when I am oppressed by flies and files and the social artifices of our urban civilization.

CHAPTER V

DESERTS AND OASES

Yangihissar, Monday, 2 October

YESTERDAY, while approaching Ighiz Yar, I had my first glimpse of the desert. It was an impressive sight. It was the more impressive on account of the abruptness of the transition from mountain scenery to desert. For weeks we had been travelling in mountainous country; but yesterday we were suddenly face to face with the desert. For the last two or three days the mountains had been dwindling into hills, and the hills into hillocks. When we got within five miles of Ighiz Yar they stood respectfully aside pointing, like two arms, to the infinity of space before us. There was a haze of dust which hid the trees in the oases. It was like approaching an open sea.

I have not experienced such a sensation since December, 1906. In that year my father attended the Srimulam Praja Sabha[1] in Trivandrum as one of the two representatives from Kottayam. I accompanied my father to Trivandrum. The journey, which now takes three hours, then took us three days over the beautiful backwaters of Travancore. My father had our little boat tied up and took me out to show me the sea. I still remember my joy and bewilderment at seeing an expanse of water stretching as far as eye could see. I had a similar sensation today.

But I had no time to ponder over the majesty of the desert. Gillett met me at Ighiz Yar, within a few minutes of my arrival, in his new station wagon and bounced me over 25 miles of road, which was no road, into Yangihissar. It would have been better for my still slightly aching back to ride. But I had no time even to think of my backache;

[1] The Representative Assembly in Travancore.

Gillett, bearded, bemonocled and beatific, was overelmingly friendly. I had corresponded with him since 37 when he was Vice-Consul, Kashgar, and I was a puty Secretary in the External Affairs Department; and was now good to see him in the flesh. The flesh, he plained, had latterly shown a tendency to increase; for Kashgar there was little scope for exercise. He is a eat walker—he walked all the way from Gilgit to Kash-r—but in Sinkiang even beggars disdain walking and go egging on donkeys.

The entire British Consulate in Kashgar had come to et me in Ighiz Yar—Binns, the Vice-Consul and sistant Surgeon, to treat me for my backache; Raza i, the Head Clerk, to accompany us to Khotan; Ghulam rwar, the Accountant, to lend me kochins; and Ch'u, e Chinese Secretary, to act as interpreter with the Chinese icials. I felt that either the Agent-General for India in ina was a more important personage, or the British nsulate in Kashgar was a less overworked office, than had thought.

Gillett and I stayed in the summer house of a former rki Magistrate who was rich and has 'disappeared'. His mily occupied the main building and we his guest house. was a delightful but unkempt garden, with apple trees d pear trees, a bed of red roses and a lily pond. As for r private needs, we had to go out into the neighbouring lds. The maize plants were tall and thick.

Soon after my arrival the Hsien Chang (District agistrate) and the Police Officer called. The conversation did not rise above the level of polite trivialities. his morning, however, it promised to become more teresting. The Hsien Chang who did not know English ked me how many religions there were in India. I replied at there were two main religions, Hinduism and Islam, d a number of subsidiary religions, most of which had rung from them or were affiliated to them. The Hsien

Chang then asked me if I could give a brief summary of the distinctive features of Hinduism. This was a tall order; and I replied that the peculiarity of Hinduism was that it was not a revealed religion. Christianity *minus* Christ was nothing; Islam *minus* the Holy Koran was zero. But Hinduism was not dependent on one Book or Prophet. It had grown in the course of ages as a system of philosophy and worship.... All this, however, was too much for the Hsien Chang to grasp and for Gillett to convey. Gillett, admirable interpreter as he is, contented himself by saying that Hinduism was a kind of Taoism or animism—worship of spirits. And in interpreting me thus he himself felt that he was maligning my religion.

Gillett is a wizard. He produced a bottle of Hennessy's brandy—a rarity in these war days. I had intentionally kept away from drink throughout my journey. If I had tasted it one day I would have had to have it in increasing doses every day; for the cold and fatigue would have been good excuses. But Gillett's Hennessy was grand. It made my blood tingle through the veins. It also made me think of the wisdom of our scriptures ; for our Gods drink, and our Demons[1] don't.

Yarkand, Tuesday, 3 *October*

I am still following in the footsteps of Hsuan Tsang—but in a car. Yesterday we had planned to leave Yangihissar at 1.0 but could not do so till 3.30. We had to wait for the petrol—the petrol which had accompanied me all the way from Gilgit but which the caravanbashi decided, at Ighiz Yar, to load on donkeys instead of his own ponies which he had hired out to better advantage. And once the long train of donkeys arrived, Gillett had to check the petrol. He found that 47 tins of 2 gallons each actually yielded 51½ gallons of petrol. The rest had vanished by

1 i.e., Asuras=non-drinkers of *sura*, an ancient Indian liquor.

leakage or evaporation. It seems strange that the British Consul-General in Kashgar should have to be supplied with petrol from India at such expense and inconvenience; but Sinkiang apparently does not produce sufficient petrol for her own requirements and Russia is not in a mood to oblige her.

From Yangihissar to Yarkand we travelled over a comparatively new motor road. In most places it runs over or parallel to the old caravan road which has been in use for over 2,000 years and which was the main line of communication between China, 'the Western Regions', Bokhara, Samarkand and the Roman Empire. The construction of this new motor road must be regarded as one of the achievements of the late regime in Sinkiang. Gillett's tour to Keriya in 1937, when this road was not in existence, took three months; we hope to cover it in three weeks, including the necessary halts at various places *en route*.

I saw a number of old mud pillars, called Pao T'ais. The Chinese reckon distance in terms of time. A Pao T'ai denoted a distance of 2¼ miles, that being the normal speed of a laden caravan in one hour. Besides Pao T'ai they have a T'ash which represents an hour's going on an ambling horse—roughly four miles. And 10 Li (a Li is about one-third of a mile) denote an hour's march on foot and 100 Li a day's march.

For the first hour after we left Yangihissar, I unashamedly went to sleep (so terrific was the glare) in spite of the novelty of this desert trip. Every now and then, however, our station wagon would bump me out of my sleep; and then I would see a vast expanse of gravel and sand and occasionally a few trees and houses. During the second hour I was wide awake, but there was nothing to see. After leaving Kizal, some 30 miles from Yangihissar, one goes through an uninterrupted desert, without any trace of vegetation or habitation. But on approaching

Yarkand we motored for 20 miles through a green oasis with well-tilled fields, sluggish streams, pleasant avenues and a network of irrigation channels.

It was well after sunset when we reached Yarkand town. We were accommodated in a house belonging to an old Aksakal. Gillett has not brought his cook; he thought that, as in Yangihissar, so throughout this tour, we would be the guests of the Chinese Government. I was a little sceptical about this; and my scepticism proved well-founded. The Aksakal, however, turned out chapathis and a curry which had far too much ghee in it for Gillett, a little too much for me and just sufficient for Raza Ali.

Yarkand, Wednesday, 4 October

The drive from Yangihissar to Yarkand over a very rough road was too much for my back muscles; and I had to take to bed once more. This house, however, is far pleasanter to be ill in than the mud hut in Tashkurghan. It belongs to Khan Bahadur Abdul Rahim, a former Aksakal, who was deported to India a few years ago for alleged disloyalty to the then existing regime. He was luckier than his fellow-deportee, one Rattan Singh, who was deported in midwinter and died over the Mintaka Pass.

Through the windows of my bedroom I get a fine view. In front of the house is a stately chenar—the first I have seen after Baltit and the best after Gilgit. Beyond the chenar tree is a garden in which roses, chillies and cabbages are all grown together. And all round this semicircular compound are poplars, swaying and trembling in every breeze like Lydia Bennet's heart at the sight of every uniformed soldier.

There are also a number of birds in this garden. On the Roof of the World, yaks, goats and ponies were my constant companions. But now one sees such familiar sights as pigeons cooing and wooing each other.

From my window I see a number of human beings too. Last evening I saw some 300 of them, who claimed to be my countrymen. They had come to see me (which they couldn't, as I was indisposed, though the more inquisitive peeped in at me through the window) and to lay their grievances before me and the British Consul-General. They are mostly petty landowners who have been here for generations, have married Turki women, speak Turki (and nothing else) and have never been to India. Yet they cling tenaciously to their British nationality. Their grievances mostly related to taxation which, according to them, was unbearably heavy and exasperatingly uncertain. They also complained of various levies in kind as well as in cash and of the exactions of petty officials who would grant no receipts. Gillett listened to them for two hours with the patience of a Job. He told them that British subjects were now liable to pay taxes in the same manner as Chinese. He could not interfere unless there was clear proof that there was discrimination against British subjects or the taxation was intrinsically unjust.

Yarkand, Thursday, 5 October

My stay in Yarkand has been wasted. As I have been in bed, I have not been able to make contacts with any of the officials here. Nor have I seen much of the place. And from what Gillett tells me there is not much to see. Yarkand has owed its importance for many centuries to the fact that it is a great centre of commerce—a meeting-place of traders from Kashgar, Khotan, Kashmir, Ladakh and the Oxus. But now trade is languishing. Russian goods, which flooded the markets in these regions as far down as Gilgit, have disappeared, as if by magic, and nothing has taken their place. Nor is there anything in Yarkand of antiquarian interest. Gillett went out into

the town and its outskirts today; and all he was shown was two mosques, barely 200 years old.

Yet of the antiquity of Yarkand there can be no doubt. It lay on the great trade route between the East and the West and was a natural rendezvous for traders of various nationalities. Marco Polo visited Yarkand in A.D. 1273 and found it a flourishing town. He says that there were in Yarkand many Nestorian and Jacobite Christians who had churches of their own. Marco Polo also noticed the prevalence of goitre among the people of Yarkand—a disease which is as common today as in his time. Dr Selvey, who accompanied Gillett to Yarkand last year, noted that goitre was the most prevalent of all diseases. The Turkis were the chief sufferers. The Indian Mohammedans settled in the Yarkand oasis suffered from it too, but not the Hindus, possibly because they ate more vegetables.

Competing with goitre in these areas is another scourge, syphilis. Marco Polo did not notice it, but he did notice considerable looseness in the morals of the inhabitants of these parts. An oasis people, softened by irrigation, the Turkis seem to lack the stamina and the sterner virtues of their more unkempt neighbours such as the Kirghiz and the Tajiks. Among the Kirghiz, women are greatly valued, possibly because they are fewer in numbers than men. They have to be bought by their suitors; and until recently they had to be captured.

Posgam, Friday, 6 October

We left Yarkand for Posgam at about 10. Today's 17-mile drive from Yarkand to Posgam gave us no indication that we were on the edge of the desert. On both sides of our road were double rows of poplar, interlined by an irrigation channel. And everywhere there were fields of wheat, maize and cotton.

At about the tenth mile we passed the Yarkand River which, to Hsuan Tsang, was known by the immortal name of Sita. How different this river is from the streams I passed and crossed and re-crossed between Bandipur and Ighiz Yar! Those streams had to forge their way through hills over narrow valleys and gorges; but the Yarkand River, and others in southern Sinkiang, have the entire level land on which to wander about at will. And the Yarkand does wander about in a number of channels; the bridge by which we crossed it was nearly a mile long. The Yarkand River brings with it two things—gold and goitre. The alluvial gold on its beds and banks is being extracted by a Government concern which has its headquarters at Karghalik. Goitre too has its headquarters hereabouts; and more persons suffer from it in Posgam, which is nearer the river, than in Yarkand. While approaching Ernakulam in the Cochin State, it used to be a morbid hobby of mine to count the number of persons suffering from elephantiasis. Today, while approaching Posgam, I counted an even larger number of persons suffering from goitre.

On the outskirts of Posgam we were greeted by the Indian community, who entertained us to a high tea with fried chicken, full-boiled eggs, fruits of various kinds and sunflower seeds. They had arranged accommodation for us; but Gillett thought we should go first to the Yamen[1] where, we found, the Hsien Chang expected us to be his guests. The Indian community in Posgam comes mostly from Kashmir, Chitral and Baltistan. They are all followers of His Highness the Aga Khan. We told them that judging by the way things were going in Europe the Aga Khan should be able to leave Switzerland before long and be in their midst in India next year for his sixtieth birthday. And then they would have the pleasure of

[1] District Magistrate's office.

weighing him against diamonds, as they had weighed him against gold on his fiftieth birthday.

Karghalik, Saturday, 7 October

Last night's dinner party at the Yamen turned out to be a hectic affair. Our host was Mr Wong, the acting Hsien Chang, ably assisted by the local Tax Collector and Police Officer. The Police Officer, a Manchurian, had travelled extensively in these parts, he had been over the Mintaka and in the Khunjerab gorges. The Tax Collector was a delightful raconteur, well-versed in Chinese folklore. He told us of Lake Sairam Nor near Ili which used to be a fresh-water spring. A Mongol woman who was in an unclean condition had a bath in the spring; and, lo and behold! the spring turned immediately into a salt-water lake. This story is an index to the importance attached by the Mongols to the maintenance of the purity of springs. He also told us of a sacred temple, pleasantly situated on the bank of a river, where certain Mongols thought they would go and have a picnic lunch. While they were crossing the stream with their sheep and utensils, the river rose in anger and swept them all away. How these stories reminded me of our own folklore!

While talking of Pao T'ais, which we saw on our way, the Tax Collector told us that in Han times and even earlier they were used as beacons. He told us the story of the Queen of the Ch'ou dynasty who once ordered the beacons to be lit for her amusement. She was a sombre woman who never smiled. The only thing that pleased her was the sound of tearing silk. Yards and yards of silk used to be torn in front of her so that she might be happy. She had, however, a morbid sense of humour. On one occasion she ordered the beacons to be lit as a sign that the enemy was about to attack the kingdom. All the feudal chiefs assembled post-haste with their armed followers

ready to proceed against the enemy. But it was a false alarm; and seeing the expression on their faces the unsmiling Queen broke out into a smile. When, some months later, the enemy actually attacked the kingdom and the beacons were lit, not a single feudal chief responded; and the kingdom was conquered by the enemy. 'A smile of beauty', says the Chinese historian, 'overturned an Empire.'

But to return to our dinner. At first a number of Chiu Ts'ais, literally 'wine dishes', meant to stimulate an appetite for wine, were brought. They were a complete dinner in themselves; and we helped ourselves to them liberally, thinking that they were. Then more and more dishes followed, each with an expression of regret from the host that in these remote places he could not give us a good dinner—a sentiment which we refuted not only in words but in deeds. The zest with which we fell to these dishes showed how much we enjoyed them. I must confess, however, that I could not take to the drink with equal zest. It was some kind of liquor, distilled out of rice in Karghalik—alcohol, pure, searing, scorching, withering. Yet we had to have at least a dozen glasses of this fiery liquor. Toasts of international import were drunk; and we could not but empty our glasses for each toast, for so much depended on it—'Victory'; 'Sino-Indian friendship'; 'the health of the Generalissimo'; and 'the help rendered to the Chinese by the Allies'. I feared we were getting drunk. But Gillett didn't think so. His definition of getting drunk is contained in the following Welsh rhyme, translated by Peacock:

> Not drunk is he who from the floor
> Can rise alone and still drink more.
> But drunk is he who prostrate lies
> Without the power to drink or rise.

We left Posgam for Karghalik—a distance of 23 miles—at about 11. Our kind hosts escorted us, as the custom is in these parts, to the first bridge outside the town. We

passed the Tiznaf River which, like the Yarkand, had spread itself out over the whole countryside so much so that we had to cross it over 'the Nine Bridges'. About half-way between Posgam and Karghalik we were met by a host of Indians in the Karghalik area who entertained us to 'tea', which meant a number of meat dishes and a variety of nuts and fruits. Most delicious of all were the grapes for which Karghalik is noted, some of which were as big as plums.

Karghalik, Sunday, 8 October

It is good to be again in a place which, we know for certain, Hsuan Tsang visited. He makes no mention of Yarkand; and his visit to that town is therefore a matter of conjecture. But he did visit Karghalik and does not mince his words about it. His distinguished predecessor, Fa-hsien, visited Karghalik about A.D. 400 and found the Ruler devoted to Buddhist law. Around him were 'more than a thousand monks, mostly students of the Mahayana'. Hsuan Tsang, however, appears to have been unfavourably impressed by the character of the people. 'The men', he writes, 'are passionate and cruel; they are false and treacherous and in open daylight practise robbery.... Their politeness is very scant; and their knowledge of arts and literature equally so.' Yet they were not indifferent to religion, for, says Hsuan Tsang, 'they have an honest faith in the three precious objects of worship and love the practice of religion. There are several tens of Sangharamas, but mostly in a ruined condition; there are some hundred followers who stand by the Great Vehicle.'

I was specially interested to read that the writing in use in Karghalik at that time was an Indian script. Sir Aurel Stein has brought together all the evidence bearing on this point. Sung Yun, a Chinese pilgrim, who crossed the Karghalik Kingdom in A.D. 519, says that the writing resembled that of the P'o-lo-men or Brahmins (the Chinese

call Hinduism P'o-lo-men cha). Hsuan Tsang himself says that the written characters used in Karghalik or Che-chiu-chia, as it was known then, were the same as those of Chu-sa-tan-na or Khotan. And Sir Aurel Stein's explorations in the Khotan Desert have shown beyond doubt that the writing in Khotan was the Brahmi script of India. Thus not only the religion but even the language used in the kingdoms of southern Sinkiang during the T'ang period were borrowed from India.

This impressive connexion between India and China has been kept up, in different fields and with various vicissitudes, to our own day. Karghalik is a natural centre of trade with India The two great routes from India to Central Asia are the Gilgit route and the Leh route. The Gilgit route goes over the great Passes of the Burzil, the Mintaka and the Chichkillik (or the Gez) and debouches in the Central Asian plain at Yangihissar (or at Kashgar). The Leh route crosses the even higher Passes of the Karakoram, Chuchu Dawan, Sanju, Sasser and Sujet and debouches at Karghalik. And until recently there was a fairly flourishing trade by the Leh route. This accounts for the presence, until a few years ago, of Hindu traders in southern Sinkiang. In 1924 Skrine noticed that there were 100 to 150 traders from Amritsar and Hoshiarpur in Yarkand alone ; and there were also a few of that less attractive tribe, Shikarpur moneylenders, in Yangihissar and Karghalik. In Karghalik there was even a Hindu serai. Yet I have not yet come across a single Hindu trader in Sinkiang. This is an index to the recent cessation of Indo-Chinese trade, partly owing to the war and partly owing to the political conditions in Sinkiang during the last decade.

Indian traders are now conspicuous by their absence; but not Indians. Here, as in Yarkand, there is a small and compact community of Indian agriculturists, owning land. How far they can be regarded as Indians is a

question which gives Gillett a headache. Whatever their nationality in the eye of the law, these men have all been settled in China, speak Turki and not Urdu and are as loyal to the administration as the people among whom they are living. After all nationality is only a theory; the fact is that these men have made China their home. And to a statesman and administrator facts are more important than theories.

Karghalik, Monday, 9 October

Gillett was after all wise in leaving his cook behind; for everywhere, except in Yarkand—and even in Yarkand the Administrative Superintendent has asked us to be his guests on our return journey—we are being treated as State guests. In Posgam the streets were actually beflagged in our honour. And here, in Karghalik, Mr Kung, the Hsien Chang, has spared no pains to make us comfortable. He is the first District Officer I have met whose home is in Sinkiang, but even he does not know Turki. This ignorance of local languages must be a serious handicap to District Officers ; in India it would be a positive disqualification. I would not have been able, or sent, to administer the Zhob if I had not known Pushtu.

Mr Kung, a chubby little man, looking as if he is still in his twenties but actually 37 (all Chinese look younger than they are), was most hospitable. He entertained us to a combined lunch and dinner party which lasted from 3 to 5. Russian vodka flowed freely; and our capacity for quaffing it was stimulated and accelerated by a curious Chinese game. One man puts forward a certain number of fingers and his opponent does the same. He who guesses the total is the winner, and the loser must empty his wine-glass. A childish game, but it serves its purpose and the Chinese play it with lightning speed and tremendous zest.

Most of the Chinese here have two meals a day; and we are also becoming two-mealers. We have our breakfast at about 9, no lunch or dinner and an afternoon meal at any time between 3 and 5. That meal is big enough to cover lunch and dinner; but man is a slave to habit and I begin to feel hungry towards midnight. And this keeps me awake. The chowkidar and the sentry helped to keep me awake too—the chowkidar by beating two sticks together every half an hour to show that he was awake and the sentry by indulging, every 10 minutes, in violent spitting, accompanied by a loud noise. Evidently the Three People's Principles have come to Sinkiang, but not yet the New Life Movement which deprecates spitting.

It was the weekly bazaar today in Karghalik; and Gillett and I decided to take a stroll. Actually it turned out to be a procession. A crowd of men, women and children collected around us; and reinforced at every corner it followed us in a mile-long procession. It reminded me of the crowds which Anujee, with her sari, nose-ring and red mark on the forehead used to attract in the Spanish towns we passed through in 1934. The children had great fun running around us and in front of us wondering what sort of creatures we were and how Gillett's eye-glass remained where it did unsupported and why his beard was so red. The women looked at us unveiled. Purdah seems to have gone out of fashion here; and where veils are used the object seems to be decoration rather than concealment. The gay colours of which women seem fond were a cheerful contrast to the standardized blue of Chungking. The women paint their eyebrows to connect them both and make them look like one straight unbroken line. Goitre is as prevalent as in Marco Polo's days. Grapes and melons were plentiful in the bazaar. Of local industries we saw little except feeble attempts to make cloth and paper out of mulberry bark. Of Indian goods and traders there was

not a trace. This is strange, for Karghalik stands at the head of a historic route between India and China—a route which is admittedly difficult but which for centuries did not prevent Indians and Chinese from using it for cultural as well as commercial purposes.

Goma, Tuesday, 10 *October*

These oases are beginning to get on my nerves. They are all alike; they grow the same crops and produce the same langour. They all suffer from the same evils—flies and dust, goitre and gonorrhœa, rising prices and waning trade and petty pinpricks from petty officials. And the people exhibit a 'placid, pathetic contentment' which is convenient enough to an administrator but depressing to a visitor.

This morning's 55-mile drive through the desert from Karghalik to Goma, however, was a tonic to my drooping spirits. Once more I felt I was in the amplitude of space. In front, behind, to the right, to the left was an endless expanse of gravel which stretched to the skies and merged with them in an all-embracing dust-haze. Someone described it as 'miles and miles of damn all'. Yet there is something majestic about it—something terrifying in its absoluteness, in its exclusion of any object which might distract your attention. We could see nothing in the desert except a few brokendown Pao T'ais and a couple of Langars—or Posting Houses—built for the convenience of wayfarers. We saw no living creature except a solitary vulture which was probably attracted by some creature which had just ceased to be living. Our route was lined with skeletons of animals which had perished in the desert. To judge by their numbers, the desert must be claiming far more victims than the Kokminak Pass or the Chichkillik plateau. Indeed so numerous were they that Gillett and I had a competition as to who would be able to count a

larger number of skeletons—he on the right side of the road or I on the left.

Such was my impression of the desert this morning. How much more terrifying it must be to a traveller on foot or on horseback! Here is Fa-hsien's description of the desert:

Here there are many evil demons and hot winds. Travellers who encounter them all perish to a man. There is not a bird to be seen in the air above nor an animal in the ground below. Though you look all round most earnestly to find where you can cross, you know not where to make your choice, the only mark and indication being the dry bones of the dead left upon the sand.

At about midday we saw a couple of deer darting across the road. Then we knew that an oasis must be near. Or were they just running towards some mirage, taking it to be water? We have in Sanskrit a metaphorical expression, borrowed from the desert, *mriga thrishna.* Literally it means 'the deer's thirst'; metaphorically it means the pursuit of an imaginary object. It is applied to a man who follows some unattainable fancy, like the deer in the desert which takes the distant sand to be water and runs towards it in order to quench its thirst, only to find that the longer it runs, the farther the water recedes.

However, the deer which we saw did not belong to this category, for presently we reached the pleasant oasis of Goma. We found the town gaily decorated. For today is the Day of Days in the Chinese Calendar, 'the Double Tenth'. It is the thirty-third anniversary of the overthrow of the Son of Heaven, who had ruled over China for 4,000 years, and the establishment of a Republic, based on the Three People's Principles, namely, Nationalism, Democracy and Livelihood. Today is also the first anniversary of the inauguration of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek as President of the Republic. And—to put small things with great—it is also the first anniversary of my reception by the President as India's Representative in China within

a few hours of his own assumption of the Supreme Office in the State. It was on this day last year that I set my eyes for the first time on President and Madame Chiang. They did indeed look a distinguished couple—he, resplendent in uniform, and she, chic and charming, in a black dress with a red sash on which was glittering an Order with the lustre of diamonds.

Khotan, Wednesday, 11 October

Last night we attended a Turki dramatic performance in connexion with the 'Double Tenth' celebrations. The Club Hall—every town in these parts has one—was full to overflowing with men, women and children. The women, though Muslim, took no trouble to conceal themselves from the public eye. They occupied one side of the hall, as our own women do in cinemas and theatres in the less fashionable towns in India. The chief item in the performance was a couple of scenes from a very popular Turki play *Gharib Sanam*, reminiscent of *Laila Majnun*. All the paraphernalia of romantic plays was there—the Wazir's son falling presumptuously in love with the king's daughter, she reciprocating it secretly and not daring to show it, her maids of honour fanning it into flame, his companions trying to tease him out of it, clandestine messages, elegant swoonings, bouquets of roses and so on. For a small provincial town the acting was good and the music was excellent. The tunes were identical with the more popular and less intricate ones in North India and showed no Chinese influence. In fact I felt transported to a North Indian theatre; and the punctuation, and frequent interruption, of acting by singing was typical of our old Indian dramas. The dresses, however, were different. Women wore trousers which disappeared in their long boots—salwars—often a waistcoat, and always a beautifully embroidered cap which perched on their heads without

hiding their hair which fell in long plaits. Apart from *Gharib Sanam* the school children gave a number of songs and dances. The songs were mostly of a patriotic character, as befitted a performance in honour of the 'Double Tenth'. The following were some of the refrains as translated to me. 'Our strength must grow from more to more so that our enemies may be utterly vanquished.' 'Thirty-three years have passed since the people of China have come into their own. During this period they have made more progress than in the preceding 3,000 years.' 'Our land is a beautiful garden; and we are the nightingales in it. Now we can sing more lustily than ever before.' And, at the end of the play, a portrait of Sun Yat-sen, held aloft by two of the dancers, was brought on the stage. In Chungking the audience would have sprung to their feet; here no one stood up. Evidently the cult of Sun Yat-sen has not yet made much headway in these outlying regions.

Our own closest contact with that cult has been through Madame Sun Yat-sen. Our meetings with her will remain among our imperishable memories of Chungking. For there is about her something infinitely gracious. John Gunther was not exaggerating in describing her as 'a gazelle, a hidden flower, a beautifully luminous bit of porcelain; a source of spiritual continuity and power; a shadow with flame behind it'.

The country between Goma and Khotan was very similar to that between Karghalik and Goma. 'Miles and miles of damn all' interspersed with a very occasional oasis, whose very existence depends on the streams, issuing from the Kunlun mountains and disappearing in the ever-advancing desert. Only, there was a change in the nature of the desert. It is becoming increasingly sandy. And then the land becomes undulating. Instead of one vast expanse of gravel, one sees, as it were, waves and waves of sandy desert, with elephantine sand dunes which disappear

indistinguishably among the foothills of the Kunlun range. The Kunlun range itself has remained hidden; we have been motoring within a few miles of it, but so impenetrable is the dust haze in these parts that we have not yet been able to get a glimpse of it. Towards the end of our trip today we passed over the dry stony bed of the Kara-kash River which brings large quantities of water in the summer; and then we entered Khotan, the largest oasis in the Tarim basin and historically the most interesting.

Khotan, Thursday, 12 *October*

I am on hallowed ground. My thoughts fly back to a period when Khotan used to be a centre of civilization. Not merely the centre of *a* civilization, but the rendezvous, the product and the transmitter of the three greatest civilizations the world has seen, namely, the Indian, Chinese and Graeco-Roman. So great was the impact of Indian culture on Sinkiang in the first ten centuries of the Christian era that this region may appropriately be called, as Ptolemy called it, Serindia.

The two great apostles of Serindian culture and religion were the Chinese pilgrims, Fa-hsien and Hsuan Tsang. Both visited Khotan, the former on his way to India in A.D. 400 and the latter on his way back from India to China in A.D. 644, and have left accounts of it. 'A pleasant and prosperous Kingdom', says Fa-hsien about Khotan, 'with a numerous and flourishing population. The inhabitants all profess our Law and join together in its religious music for their enjoyment. The monks amount to several myriads, most of whom are students of the Mahayana.' The king was an ardent Buddhist; and Fa-hsien goes into raptures over 'the king's New Monastery'. 'Seven or eight Li to the west of the city', says Fa-hsien, 'is what is called the king's New Monastery, the building of which took eighty years and extended

over three reigns. It is 250 cubits in height, rich in elegant carving and inlaid work, covered with gold and silver, and furnished throughout with a combination of all the precious substances. Behind the tope there has been built a Hall of Buddha, of the utmost magnificence and beauty, the beams, pillars, venetianed doors and windows being all overlaid with leaf-gold. Besides this, the apartments of the monks are imposingly and elegantly decorated, beyond the power of words to express.' Fa-hsien himself was accommodated in the Gomati monastery, known after the Kara-kash River which we crossed yesterday and which was then known as Gomati even as the Yarkand River was known as Sita. He gives a vivid description of the great spring festival when sacred images were carried through the city in splendidly decorated cars 'more than thirty cubits high' and 'looking like the great halls of a monastery'—a description which reminded me of the great procession of the sacred chariots of the Madura temple in which I often took part as a boy.

Hsuan Tsang who came to Khotan from Karghalik has left an even more detailed description of Khotan, its people and its monuments. His fame as a sage had preceded him; he was received by the king himself on the border of his territory and escorted to the capital which was at a distance of three marches from the border. He spent eight months in Khotan and has thus described it:

The country is about 4,000 li in circuit; the greater part is nothing but sand and gravel and the arable portion of the land is very contracted. The latter is suitable for the cultivation of cereals and produces abundance of fruits. The manufactures are carpets, felts of fine quality and fine woven light silks. Moreover, it produces white and dark jade. The climate is soft and agreeable but there are tornadoes which bring with them clouds of dust. The manners and customs show a sense of propriety and justice. The inhabitants are mild by nature and respectful; they love to study literature and distinguish themselves by their

skill and industry. The people are easygoing, given to enjoyments and live contented with their lot. Music is much practised in the country and men love the song and the dance. Few of them wear garments of wool and fur; most dress in light silks and white cloth. Their appearance is full of urbanity; their customs are well regulated. They have chronicles. Their written characters as well as their laws and literature resemble the Indian model; the forms have been somewhat modified, but the differences are slight. The spoken language differs from that of other territories. The law of Buddha is held in great esteem. There are about a hundred Sangharamas, containing some five thousand monks, most of whom study the doctrine of the Great Vehicle.

Hsuan Tsang relates an interesting legend regarding the origin of Khotan or 'Ku-stana', which means 'the breast of the earth'. According to this legend the first king of Khotan was descended miraculously from Vaisravana, whom the Chinese call Pi-sha-men and Hindus call Kubera, the God of Wealth. As this royal child would not take milk he was fed by the earth which swelled up into the form of a woman's breast. Hence the name Ku-stana, the old name for Khotan. Hence also the existence in Hsuan Tsang's time of the great temple of Vaisravana in Khotan. Stein has subjected this legend to a critical analysis and is of opinion that it points to 'a partial occupation of Khotan by Indian immigrants from the region of ancient Taxila'. His theory is supported by the prevalence at that time of an Indian language in Khotan to which Hsuan Tsang has referred and which is amply borne out by Stein's discovery of thousands of Kharoshthi documents in the Niya site, relating to everyday administrative matters. It is also corroborated by the racial characteristics of the people of Khotan whose features often resemble those of the Dards and the Kashmiris.

Stein has also identified the sites of various buildings to which reference has been made by Hsuan Tsang and subsequent visitors to the capital of Khotan. One such

was Mount Gosringa where there was a convent, containing a statue of Buddha which sent forth a brilliant light. From this mount Buddha himself was said to have preached a sermon, expounding the Law, and prophesying that a great Buddhist Kingdom would arise in that region. Stein has identified this mount with Kohmari hill above the Kara-kash River. Even today it is venerated—but as a Muslim Ziarat. The capital of the kingdom itself was situated on a spot, now called Yotkan, some five miles from Khotan. Here was the temple of Vaisravana, 'a tower built in wood, seven storeys high', at the summit of which resided the God himself. Here stood the royal palace, which consisted of a number of buildings, all facing east and covered with frescoes. Here, according to a Chinese mission which visited Khotan in A.D 738, was 'the Pavilion of the Seven Phoenixes'. And from here issued that grand procession of sacred images in lofty cars, to see which Fa-hsien prolonged his stay in Khotan for three months.

Khotan, Friday, 13 *October*

When I decided to come to Khotan I had hopes that I might be able to see some remains of the old civilization of Khotan. I have been able to see nothing. Stein's books had prepared me for a disappointment; but I had not realized that all traces of an ancient civilization could be so completely blotted out. The old stupas and viharas, temples and monasteries, palaces and pavilions are all buried in the dust, beyond even the power of Stein's spade to unearth. So is Buddhism. By the tenth century A.D. Buddhism in Sinkiang and indeed in all China had become debased. It had lost its original glow and hold on the people. The time was ripe, in China proper, for an awakening; it came with the revival of Confucianism which took place under the Sung dynasty and with the

advent, in 'the Western Regions', of a new and virile faith, Islam. Even so the Buddhist Kingdom of Khotan put up a more prolonged and more strenuous fight against Islam than any of its neighbours. By A.D. 1000, however, it succumbed; Marco Polo who visited Khotan two centuries later wrote that the people were 'all worshippers of Mahommet' and 'subject to the Great Kaan' (Kublai Khan).

Thus ended the long and honourable connexion between Khotan and India ; and Serindia became a Serislamic state.

The religion changed but not the people. They have not changed physically or morally. Stein has pointed out that there have been few ethnic variations in these oases. Protected by the desert on one side and the mountains on the other the people have remained racially intact from the dawn of history. These oases never attracted a pastoral people, for the rainfall is less than 2 inches a year and there is little grazing. Moreover, to live happily in these regions, 'cribb'd, cabin'd and confin'd' in these pleasant, but stagnant oases, surrounded by the ever-encroaching desert, requires more philosophy and contentment than the average human being possesses.

In the first few centuries of the Christian era, Buddhism gave the necessary philosophy and contentment. The philosophy is gone but the contentment remains. The people of this region have been a prey to the winds of fortune. The Chinese conquered it, lost it and conquered it over and over again. Hordes of Huns, Yuehchi, White Huns, Tibetans and Uigar Turks have overrun these regions from time to time. And yet the inhabitants held on, apparently unruffled.

> The East bow'd low before the blast,
> In patient, deep disdain.
> She let the legions thunder past,
> And plunged in thought again.

But no ! the people of these parts did not plunge in thought but in song and dancing. 'Music is much practised in the country', said Hsuan Tsang, 'and men love the song and the dance.' That is as true today as it was 1,300 years ago. Last night I myself noticed with what zest and vivacity the Turki girls sang and danced on the stage. Even in the carpet factory which we visited this morning the workers were singing, or humming tunes.

The people of the Khotan region have always been fond of sensual pleasures. They have been charged with a certain laxity of morals. Marco Polo noted as follows: 'If the husband of any woman goes away upon a journey and remains away for more than 20 days, as soon as that term is past the woman may marry another man and the husband may marry whom he pleases.' Evidently variety is the spice of life.

Politically they have had no lack of variety. Even during the last decade they have gone through various vicissitudes. In 1937 when Gillett visited these oases, they were under the iron yoke of their fellow-religionists, the Tungans; and Ma Hu-shan, the Tungan rebel leader, had his headquarters in Khotan. The Tungans, however, were soon liquidated; and Sinkiang came under General Sheng Shih-ts'ai, who owned but a threadbare allegiance to the Central Government and proclaimed, as distinct from the Three People's Principles, the Six Great Principles of Government of which the cardinal article was friendship with Soviet Russia. Now the Central Government wields direct authority in the Province; and Turki girls are singing 'San Min Chu I'[1] with as much gusto as they used to recite 'Liu Ta Cheng Ts'e'[2] a couple of years ago.

1 'The Three People's Principles' of Sun Yat-sen.

2 'The Six Great Principles of Government' of General Sheng Shih-ts'ai.

Khotan, Saturday, 14 *October*

Here, in Khotan, we are even more regally entertained than elsewhere on our tour. We are accommodated in a yamen, built by the Administrative Superintendent, Mr Li Wei Fang. It is a splendid building, with a reception room, large dining and office rooms, a number of guest rooms and all conveniences (except one). It is situated in the heart of the native quarter. 'Native', by the way, is not a term of reproach here as it is in India. Chinese officials who know English speak quite naturally and without condescension of the Turkis as 'natives'. 'When we are among the natives,' one of them told me, 'we observe the native holiday' (i.e. Friday).

Mr Li Wei Fang lives in the yamen in almost gubernatorial style. He has a large retinue of well-trained servants; and his cook, who hails from Peking, is a marvel. He can turn out Chinese, English, French and Russian dishes with equal facility. Last night he gave us a surprise; he produced an excellent dish of Indian pulao and kabob. Mr Li has an ample stock of wines too to which Gillett and I did full justice. At the end of the dinner we were a swaying picture of international fellowship, swearing more enthusiastically than articulately the eternal friendship between our Nations.

Mr Li struck me as a man of ability and imagination. He is a native of Manchuria and has spent seven years in this Province, three of them in Khotan. He told me that he devoted his first year in Khotan to the improvement of communications; his second year to the development of cottage industries; his third to the revival of the silk industry; and he proposes to devote the fourth year to the spread of education. He took us to a number of factories —a silk factory, woollen factory, carpet factory and leather factory. I was particularly interested in the silk industry for which China has been famous from time immemorial. Khotan has been identified with 'Serindia', from which,

according to Procopius, the silkworm was first introduced into the Byzantine Empire. The story is that in A.D. 550, the Emperor Justinian persuaded two Persian monks to bring him the precious eggs from Kathay, which they hid in a hollow bamboo staff at the risk of their lives; for death would have been the penalty had the Chinese discovered the contents of the bamboo staff. Hsuan Tsang has related the legend of the introduction of silkworms into Khotan itself. Hearing that China possessed silkworms, the King of Khotan sent an envoy to China to procure them; but the Emperor of China would not let them go outside his frontier. The King of Khotan therefore adopted a ruse. He prayed for the hand of a Chinese Princess. The request was granted; and the Princess was privately asked by the king's messenger to bring with her some mulberry seeds and silkworms so that she might be able to wear fine silk robes in Khotan. These she brought into Khotan by concealing them in the lining of her headdress which the Frontier Guards did not dare to examine.

At the carpet factory I learnt that the workers were paid 5 kochins, or less than 3 annas a day; but I was told that they were given rice at concession rates. I admired the deftness of their hands. They are experimenting with various designs, borrowed from Persian, Bokhara and Brussels carpets. This does credit to their imitative genius, but will do no good to the reputation of Khotan carpets which are valued by connoisseurs in Asia and Europe for their native designs such as the pomegranate, the Tree of Life, and for the inimitable sheen which they derive from the native vegetable dyes.

Last night Gillett and I were given a great welcome in the presence of some 2,000 persons in the local Town Hall cum Club and Theatre. Mr Li read out a speech, welcoming us on behalf of the 600,000 persons in his Division and stressing the age-long friendship between China and India. He hoped that my visit to Sinkiang would be

followed by closer relations in the commercial no less than the cultural field. Mr Li made a speech in a similar vein, welcoming Gillett. I replied; and Gillett acted as my interpreter, thus avoiding a speech himself. A number of Turki girls sang a song in our honour, carrying a red banner on which were inscribed in English and Chinese the words: 'WELCOME TO MR K. P. S. MENON AND MR M. C. GILLETT AND GLORIOUS SUCCESS IN THEIR WORK'. There were also a number of dances and songs in which the only words I could understand were 'San Min Chu I'. These were followed by a few scenes from old Chinese plays. In the symbolism and vigour of their acting and the general din of the performance, they reminded me of our own Kathakali.[1] I do not think any actors can do such justice to the fury and tumult of fighting as the Chinese can—or could, for the tendency now seems to be a drift away from the old dramatic traditions. The scene of one of the plays was laid in Han times. It struck me as a very democratic play. A coolie falls in love with his master's daughter; and she with him. The mother is in sympathy with the lovers; but the father is furious and turns the young man out. He joins the army. In the course of 18 years' military service, he wins great laurels and actually carves out a kingdom for himself. He then returns home as a Prince. The various scenes deal with the treatment he metes out to his former relations. There is a touching but highly restrained and, according to Indian standards, somewhat frigid meeting between the Prince and his bride. The father-in-law is summoned before him and is made to lose his face in public. As for his mother-in-law, he prostrates himself before her and does her honour; and she takes the opportunity to give her husband a bit of her mind. An old servant, who used to ill-treat him, is beheaded. Then there appears on the stage a girl whom he had married in exile. She is the daughter of a king in the

[1] The art of pantomime in Malabar.

outlying regions whom he defeated in battle and who was forced to give her to him in marriage, just as Chandra Gupta, the founder of the Maurya Empire in India, compelled Seleucus, ruler of Alexander the Great's Dependencies in North-West India, to give *his* daughter in marriage to him. This lady, however, is gauche and clumsy in her behaviour; and there are some amusing scenes in which she is taught the polite manners of China. For China is the Flowery Middle Kingdom, the home of good manners; and the rest are 'outer barbarians'.

Keriya, Sunday, 15 *October*

Today we did our longest and most tiring journey, from Khotan to Keriya, a distance of 111 miles. It took us over eight hours.

Soon after we left Khotan we crossed the Yurung-kash, 'the River of White Jade', just as we had crossed the Kara-kash, 'the River of Black Jade' while approaching Khotan. On these twin rivers depends the prosperity, and indeed the existence, of Khotan as an oasis. They are the only two rivers which find their way across the desert and join the Tarim River. All other rivers, such as the Goma and the Keriya, are lost in the sands or absorbed in irrigation. Chinese Turkestan is indeed, as Huntingdon calls it in his *Pulse of Asia,* 'the Land of Withering Rivers'.

The Yurung-kash River, like the Kara-kash and the Yarkand, spreads itself out over the level plain like *payasam*[1] on a plantain leaf. It has, however, its moments of fury; last summer it washed away the road leading to the silk factory which we visited yesterday. We crossed the Yurung-kash by a newly constructed bridge. Mr Li told us that hundreds of labourers had to be employed day and night for eight months in order to complete this bridge. The construction of such bridges and of the

[1] A Malabar sweet.

Kashgar-Keriya road itself over regions which in most places have no water, no habitation and no stone, was a task of the greatest difficulty. Like the building of the Great Wall, every stone of which is said to have cost a human life, it has inspired poetry. One of the poems about the construction of the Yarkand Bridge was distasteful to the local authorities; and I was told that a sum of 1,000 kochins was offered as reward to anyone who would furnish a clue to the discovery of the author. He still remains untraced.

For the first hour after leaving Khotan we saw the usual oasis scenery—fields of maize, cotton and wheat, and willows and poplars. Abruptly the oasis ceased to exist; and once more we entered the great sandy desert. Today we encountered typical desert winds. The wind started by blowing the all-pervading sand a few feet above the ground; and the desert looked like a sea, enveloped in the morning mist. Suddenly, however, the wind gathered momentum and became a howling sandstorm, the like of which I had never before experienced. When we got out of the car, we were almost blown off our feet; and even inside the car, our eyes, ears, noses and mouths were full of sand. How terrible it must have been for travellers on foot or horseback, like Fa-hsien and Hsuan Tsang (or Gillett in 1937) to encounter these sandstorms!

Again, we left the desert and passed through a few oases like Cheria and Gulakhma. But these were different from the mighty oases of Yarkand and Khotan. They were in the grip of the desert, even as the tribal areas on our North-West Frontier are, literally and metaphorically, in the grip of British India.

We left these oases towards the end of our journey and entered the desert once more. But now the desert had changed. It was one vast collection of sand dunes. We wound our way through hundreds of sand dunes, covered with tamarisk. The ground here has apparently sufficient

moisture for the growth of tamarisk and low shrubs and even a few trees, but not sufficient for cultivation. The trees, with the yellow and brown tints of autumn, and the tamarisk, red and purple, clinging to the sand dunes gave colour to the desert. And the wind rose scattering the multicoloured leaves.

Autumn is upon us. 'One night', wrote Ou-yang Hsiu, a distinguished Chinese writer of the eleventh century, 'I had just sat down to my books, when suddenly I heard a sound far away towards the south-west. Listening intently, I wondered what it could be. On it came, at first like the sighing of a gentle zephyr, . . . gradually deepening into the splash of waves upon surf-beat shore, . . . the roaring of huge breakers in the startled night, and howling storm-gusts of wind and rain. It burst upon the hanging bell, and set every one of its pendants tinkling into tune. It seemed like the muffled march of soldiers, hurriedly advancing bit in mouth to the attack, when no shouted orders rend the air, but only the tramp of men and horses meet the ear.

'"Boy," said I; "what noise is that? Go forth and see." "Sir," replied the boy, on his return, "the moon and stars are brightly shining; the Silver River spans the sky. No sound of man is heard without: 'tis but the whispering of the trees."

'"Alas!" I cried; "autumn is upon us. And is it thus, O boy, that autumn comes! autumn the cruel and the cold; autumn the season of fog and mist; autumn the season of cloudless skies; autumn the season of piercing blasts; autumn the season of desolation and blight! Chill is the sound that heralds its approach; and then it leaps upon us with a shout. All the rich luxuriance of green is changed; all the proud foliage of the forest swept down to earth, withered beneath the icy breath of the destroyer. For autumn is Nature's chief executioner; and its symbol is darkness. It has the temper of steel;

and its symbol is a sharp sword. It is the avenging angel riding upon an atmosphere of death. As spring is the epoch of growth, so autumn is the epoch of maturity:

Its strains decay,
And melt away,
In a dying, dying fall.

And sad is the hour when maturity is passed; for that which passes its prime must die.

'"Still what is this to plants and trees, which fade away in their due season? . . . But stay, there is man, man the divinest of all things. A hundred cares wreck his heart: countless anxieties trace their wrinkles on his brow. until his inmost self is bowed beneath the burden of life. And swifter still he hurries to decay when vainly striving to attain the unattainable, or grieving over his ignorance of that which can never be known. Then comes the whitening hair;—and why not? Has a man an adamantine frame, that he should outlast the trees of the field? Yet after all who is it, save himself, that steals his strength away? Tell me, O boy, what right has man to accuse his autumn blast?"

'My boy made no answer. He was fast asleep. No sound reached me save that of the cricket chirping its response to my dirge.'

Keriya, Monday, 16 *October*

Here too we are the guests of the District Magistrate and are accommodated in the yamen. Unlike the yamen in Khotan, this is an old-fashioned, sixty-year-old building, constructed in the time of the Manchus. At the entrance there is an inscription of the motto of Confucius, which Sun Yat-sen used to love, 'Tien Hsia Wei Kung', which means 'equality for all beneath the sun'. The building bears certain typical features of old Chinese buildings—moon doors, courtyards and spirit doors. Spirit doors are

meant to keep the spirits away. The Chinese used to think that spirits could only walk in a straight line and not go round corners. Indeed one of the reasons why the Manchus strenuously objected to the construction of railways was because they ran in straight lines and would enable the spirits to travel for miles and miles at a stretch. Another reason was that they might disturb the ancestral spirits.

The Keriya Club gave an entertainment in our honour. It consisted of a number of dances. Some of them were Russian; the rest were Turki. The former were mostly a matter of legs; the latter (like Indian dances) mostly a matter of hands. Gillett's explanation for the greater use of hands is that it is a remnant of our nomadic habits, because while riding one can use one's hands better than one's legs. This theory left me amused but unconvinced. The most accomplished dancer was undeniably pretty; she had a Madonna-like head on which was perched a jaunty embroidered cap. She captured Gillett's bachelor fancy and my mature approval. We thought she was in her teens, but Gillett discovered to his regret that she had her hair braided in two plaits which meant that she was married. Married women in these parts have a habit of advertising that fact. Girls who are unmarried wear their hair in a number of plaits; girls who are married, in two. Moreover, the older married women wear stripes across the breast—generally green stripes over a black coat.

Among the Turkis the married woman is held to be more delectable than a virgin. The ceremony of braiding the hair in two plaits is almost as important a festival as marriage. The husband gives a feast called Jawanlik Toi; there is music and dancing; and the woman appears with her hair braided in two plaits. She has now become a Jawan. Turki poets address their odes to Jawans and not to mere Chokans (girls). The former has experience; the latter has none. The following rhyme translated by

Skrine is typical of the Turki attitude:

> Who is it who knows what health is worth?
> Not the healthy man who has never been ill.
> What woman is it that knows worth in the man?
> Not the girl who has never been a Jawan.

The dances which we saw were essentially, and the music entirely, Indian in type. There were, however, certain Turki touches. One dance portrayed a whole scene of courtship in gestures without a sound. The more passionately he woos, the more resolutely she rejects him; and the music grows louder and louder and the dance madder and madder. Suddenly the climax is reached; the tension relaxes, the damsel relents, the music drops and the blissful pair leave the stage in utter weariness.

Keriya, Tuesday, 17 October

Keriya is the last of our oases in southern Sinkiang—'a terminal oasis', as Stein would call it. To the east lies the 900 miles of desert to Tun Huang. In the old days, however, Keriya was by no means a terminal oasis. It was rather an intermediate oasis. Beyond Keriya lay a string of oases as far as Tun Huang, 'the Cave of the Thousand Buddhas', whence branched off the two old trade routes between the East and the West. The Northern route went from Tun Huang past Turfan and the northern oases of the Tarim basin to Kashgar and thence to Ferghana and Samarkand. The Southern route passed through Lob Nor and Keriya, Khotan and Yarkand to the Oxus. Even today there are a few tiny oases between Keriya and Tun Huang, struggling for existence in the jaws of the desert. But the older oases are gone for ever. The jaws have closed in; and the desert has won.

It was left to an archaeologist of the Government of India to open up these jaws which had remained closed for fifteen centuries, and to reveal to the world the existence

of a unique civilization, tender, spiritual, artistic and eclectic. Along the edge of the Taklamakan desert, on the beds of rivers which have now dried up, there flowed and merged, in the first few centuries of the Christian era, the streams of Chinese, Indian and Hellenistic civilizations. At Endere, at Miran, by the Lob Nor lake, on the Niya River bed, amidst the ruins of ancient dwellings which had been abandoned since the third century A.D., and above all in Tun Huang, in a walled-up rock chapel which had been hidden for 900 years, Aurel Stein discovered hundreds of wooden documents in Indian script and language, beautiful gold coins showing Zeus hurling the thunderbolt, manuscripts in Chinese, Tibetan and Brahmi, rows of cave temples like those in Ellora and Ajanta and beautiful frescoes depicting every scene in the life of Buddha.

Not for me to visit these hallowed sites. Nor, except for the sentimental interest, is there much point in visiting them; for thanks to Stein, many of their treasures can be seen in comfort in the British Museum, London, and the Central Asian Antiquities, New Delhi. What a wonderful life was Sir Aurel Stein's, who throughout was engaged in doing what he wanted to do, did it extremely well and died in Kabul, a Mecca to him and not far from the scene of his labours, at the age of 80, still doing his work!

Khotan, Wednesday, 18 *October*

This morning Hsuan Tsang and I parted company. Since Tashkurghan, which I reached almost exactly a month ago, I have been following in his footsteps. Now he goes eastwards and I return westwards. I shall have to content myself with imagining him, as he is depicted in one of the frescoes in Miran, proceeding on and on with his animals heavily laden with sacred scriptures. He has another 900 miles of desert to do before he reaches 'the

Cave of the Thousand Buddhas'. None has given a more vivid description of the desert than himself:

The sands extend like a drifting flood for a great distance, piled up or scattered before the wind. There is no trace left behind by travellers, and often-times the way is lost, and so they wander hither and thither, quite bewildered, without any guide or direction. There is neither water nor herbage to be found; and hot winds frequently blow. When these winds rise both man and beast become confused and forgetful; and there they remain perfectly disabled. At times sad and plaintive notes are heard and piteous cries, so that between the sights and sounds of the desert men get confused and know not whither they go. Hence there are so many who perish on the journey.

We covered the 111 miles from Keriya to Khotan in six hours (excluding three hours' halt with the Hsien Chang at Lof with whom we had dinner) whereas we took eight hours to go from Khotan to Keriya; and for about fifty miles our car had to plough its way through sand over a mule track. Weather conditions, however, were entirely in our favour today. We did not encounter any sandstorms in the desert as we did on Sunday last. There was not even a wind. It was like a tranquil morning in the Arabian Sea after a stormy passage during the South-West monsoon.

Goma, Thursday, 19 *October*

We are rushing back to Kashgar. The outward journey to Keriya took us 15 days (including halts); we intend to do the return journey in 5. Our car, driven with uncanny skill by Mir Hamza, has been going gaily (except for today's breakdown) over sand and stone, motor road and mule track, unbridged rivers and wind-swept deserts. Mir Hamza is a Pathan who comes from the North-West Frontier; before he came to Kashgar he used to manufacture rifles in the Kohat tribal territory. There is only one thing he cannot brook—directions. And Gillett is as chary of giving him directions as my brother was to his

driver; when asked whether he drove his car himself, he replied that he did not believe in keeping a dog and barking.

In these parts our car is a strange phenomenon. It reminds me of the first time a car appeared in my own native town, Kottayam. It was in 1908; and I remember our servant coming excitedly to us saying that he just saw 'a carriage running without horses and without bullocks'. Here, too, men and animals are not used to the sight of cars. On seeing our station wagon, horses take fright; riders topple over; women on fleeing donkeys clasp their babies to their breasts; and their embroidered caps fly into space. Pedestrians too behave in a strange fashion. Yesterday, while we were passing through Charshamba Bazar near Khotan, a man on seeing our car darted from the right side of the road to the left and a woman from the left to the right. They clashed in the middle of the road within a foot or two of the car, rebounded, somewhat dazed, to their respective positions and then joined in the general laughter.

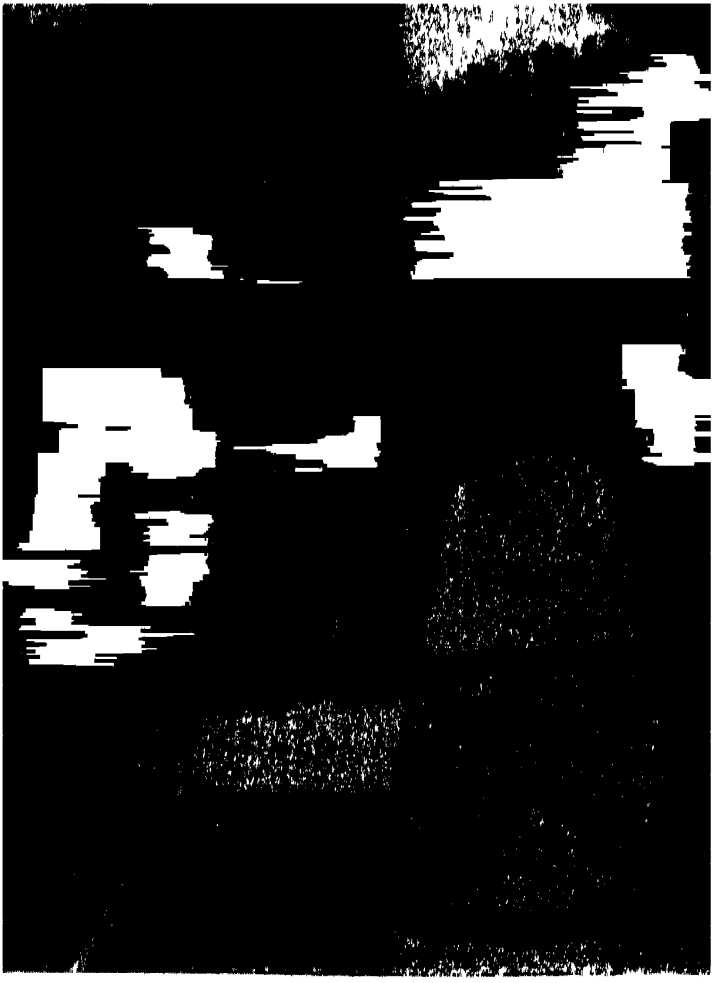
For the first few miles after leaving Khotan we took a by-road in order to see the populous and seemingly prosperous oasis of Karakash. At about the twenty-fifth mile we rejoined the motor road and entered the desert. When we had gone another 25 miles we saw that the road had been breached, presumably by a mountain torrent last summer. We were therefore obliged to drive over the sandy bed and got stuck. Mir Hamza and the other servants worked like demons for two hours, removing the sand, placing stones and logs in front of the car and pushing it; but all in vain. In the first hour the car went forward exactly 2½ feet; and in the second hour, 3½ feet. We had to traverse a hundred yards of sand before we could get on to the main road; the nearest oasis was about 15 miles away; and it was nearing evening. It looked as if we might have to spend the night in the desert. Suddenly it occurred to me that I might seek the help of

the Goddess in a temple near Ottapalam in which Anujee has great faith and, through her, I. I said to myself that I would give some such offering as silk, worth Rs. 10, if the car moved on to the main road in half an hour, and worth Rs. 20, if it happened in a quarter of an hour. Evidently the Goddess was not greedy, for she claimed only the smaller amount; and exactly in half an hour our car got out of the sand and on to the motor road.

I am not overcredulous in these matters, but must record an even more singular experience I have had. That too related to the same temple. About three years ago I accompanied Anujee to this temple. She suggested that I should put on an undercloth as a sign of respect to the Goddess; but I declined, saying laughingly that the Goddess wouldn't mind as she herself had precious little clothing! On returning from the temple I began to feel a terrible and unaccountable itching in a certain part of my body. I was so ashamed of it that I did not mention it even to Anujee. I suffered from it for two days; and on the third day I suggested to Anujee that we might visit that temple again. Anujee wondered why I had suddenly become so devout. I put on an undercloth; and we bought some red silk as offering to the Goddess and worshipped at the temple with due decorum; and on returning home, the itching completely disappeared. I told this to Anujee the next morning; and she burst into peals of gratified laughter.

Karghalik, Friday, 20 October

From Goma to Karghalik, most of the 50 miles of road lay through the desert. There was no habitation whatever except a couple of langars built by Yaqub Beg during his brief period of authority in the province in the seventies of the last century. We visited one of them, Chulak Langar, so called because of its intense cold in winter.



M. C. Gillett

'Indians' claiming British nationality, at Karghalik (*see p.* 87)

Yangtsun at Kashgar (summer 1937), with Mu Hu-shan in centre

Chulak in Turki means a cripple; and the name is meant to signify that one is apt to lose one's hands and feet on account of frostbite in winter. This langar is a great boon for travellers. There is a tank, with clear water which comes from the mountains 20 miles away. The langar is a *pukka* stone building and contains a number of rooms. In one of the rooms we saw, inscribed on the walls, the names of some Cossacks of the Russian Imperial Guard who accompanied the Russian Consul-General on his tour through southern Sinkiang in 1911.

It is exhilarating to think that one is travelling over one of the oldest international routes in history. It used to be known as the Silk Road. Millions of ponies and donkeys must have passed along this road carrying silk from China to Rome and carrying back bullion from Rome to China. Along this road went not only silk and bullion but art, culture and religion.

The earliest Indian pilgrims to China were Kashyapa Matanga and Dharma Aranya who in A.D. 65 brought a number of Buddhist scriptures of the Mahayana School to China on a white horse and worked in 'the White Horse Monastery' outside Loyang. The most famous of all Indian pilgrims was Kumarajiva who was well-versed in Sanskrit and Chinese and worked and taught at Ch'angan from A.D. 401 to 413 under the later Ch'in dynasty. Almost equally famous was Prince Gunavardhana, a scion of the Royal family of Kashmir, who went to Ceylon, thence to Java where he converted the ruling family to Buddhism, and reached Nanking in A.D. 431 at the express invitation of the King who himself went out to receive him. The Dhyana, or as the Chinese call it, the Chan School of Buddhism, was founded by Bodhidharma who lived in Loyang between A.D. 516 and 534. He is said to have possessed miraculous powers; and many a legend has grown round him. For instance, he is said to have crossed the Yangtze River on a reed. He laid stress on meditation;

and the Chan School is a blend of Buddhism and Taoism. The Hinayana School was introduced in A.D. 563 by Paramartha. It was essentially conservative and made an austere appeal to scholars and intellectuals. And in the eighth century Tantrism, which relied on mantras, yogic exercises and formulæ of magic power, was introduced by Amogha, an Indian monk on whom the King conferred the rank of Minister.

This intercourse between India and China was stimulated by the presence in India of a seat of learning which was then as renowned in the East as Oxford is in the West, namely, Nalanda University. A considerable number of Chinese students were among its alumni. Hsuan Tsang has left a vivid description of the University of Nalanda. 'The whole establishment', wrote Hsuan Tsang, 'is surrounded by a brick wall. One gate opens into the great college, from which are separated eight other halls standing in the middle. The richly adorned towers and fairy-like turrets, like painted hilltops, are congregated together. The observatories seem to be lost in the vapours of the morning, and the upper rooms tower above the clouds. From the windows one may see how the winds and the clouds produce new forms; and above the soaring eaves the conjunctions of the sun and the moon may be observed. And then we may add how the deep translucent ponds bear on their surface the blue lotus, intermingled with the Kanaka flower, of deep red colour; and at intervals the mango groves spread over all their shade.'

Yarkand, Saturday, 21 October

We motored from Karghalik to Yarkand this morning. Just before I left Karghalik, the Indian community presented me with a Khotan carpet. I was greatly touched by this kind gesture. It is a carpet of the traditional pomegranate pattern. Here the pomegranate is called the

Tree of Life and its fruit is regarded as conducive to fertility.

There is a mosque in Yarkand too which is apparently conducive to fertility. It is called the Chilten Mosque; and a legend is attached to it. Once a rich merchant of Yarkand, who lived near the site of this mosque, entertained the Holy Prophet to dinner. The Prophet thanked him for the excellent dinner and asked him whether he had any special wish. He said he had only one unfulfilled desire; he was anxious to have a child. The Prophet blessed him and left the house. Exactly nine months and nine days later, word was brought to him from all over the oasis that his numerous wives had given birth to children; and the number of new arrivals came to 999. 'I asked for a son', cried the embarrassed father, 'and I have got a curse!'

Childless women still go to the Chilten Mosque and pray for children; and judging by an experience which I myself have had I have no doubt their prayers are answered.

The Breckenridges were amongst our very best friends in Ceylon. Navaratnam Breckenridge who, alas, died a couple of years ago, was a Christian; and Mrs Breckenridge a Buddhist. Theirs was a true love match; and in marrying a Christian she incurred the displeasure of her wealthy relations and was ostracized by them. 'Breck', as we used to call him, was a philosopher who posed as a philistine. He and I kept up a correspondence in which I always addressed him as 'my dear Philistine' and he retaliated by addressing me as 'my dear Pandit'. He was fond of literature and himself had literary talents of no mean order. When he exposed the follies and foibles of fashionable society in Ceylon his pen was dipped in vitriol. But no kinder-hearted creature breathed on this earth; and Mrs Breck, while sharing her husband's generous impulses, had a glow and vitality all her own.

When we met them in 1930 they were a very happy couple. Only one thing was wanting to complete their happiness. They had been married for five or six years and had no children. Mrs Breck often used to go to my wife and tell her: 'Oh, I am so anxious to have a child. You are so happy in your children'—we have two sets of twins and two others. 'Please pray for me. I feel sure your prayers will be answered.'

Now, there is a famous temple in Cape Comorin at the tip of the Indian peninsula where childless women go and pray to the Goddess. In 1933 we asked the Brecks to spend their Christmas with us in Travancore and to accompany us to the Cape Comorin temple. This they readily did. We dressed them up in the scanty Nair clothing, put sandal on their foreheads and took them to the temple. And they prayed fervently. We were a large party—the Brecks and ourselves and our children, my brother and sister-in-law, Dr Raman Tampi and Mrs Tampi (who graciously acted as our hosts) and their charming daughter and her husband, Dr Krishnan Tampi, a tower of Public Health work in Travancore. Our house was small and had only one bedroom. We spread ourselves out under the starry sky in the courtyard and in the verandah; but we insisted that the Brecks should occupy the sole bedroom. It was Christmas Eve; and 9 months later, on the 3rd of October 1934, Mrs Breck gave birth to a child. They have named him after me, Sivasankar. A year later they had a daughter whom they have named after my wife, Saraswati. And we are their godparents.

I dare say the Chilten Mosque works similar miracles.

Kashgar, Sunday, 22 October

Today I was luckier than Marco Polo. Between Yarkand and Yangihissar I was able to have a clear view of the Kunlun mountains. Marco Polo, who took this

very route, does not even refer to their existence and presumably did not see them. No wonder, because for most of the year they remain invisible. In Central Asia, mountains, deserts and oases are all shrouded in a thick dust haze, even as the universe is veiled by Maya. For the last three weeks we ourselves have been passing near the Kunlun mountains, but not once could we see them. Today, however, they revealed themselves to us. Ranging over 20,000 feet, with hanging glaciers and Mount Qungar sticking out, the Kunlun range was quite an impressive sight. I would have been even more impressed by it if I had not recently been feasting my eyes on still higher mountains and greater glaciers at even closer quarters.

At Yangihissar we heard that some 600 Russian Kirghiz, armed with rifles and machine-guns, came via Subashi to Sarikol and carried off 10,000 sheep and 1,000 yaks. The Peace Preservation Corps in Tashkurghan, numbering 200, put up a stout fight, but was altogether outnumbered.

Leaving Yangihissar after lunch, we passed through a succession of oases, broken here and there by the long arm of the desert. At about 4 we passed 'the New Kashgar City', which is really a hundred years old; and in half an hour we drove through an unostentatious gate into the spacious and newly painted premises of the British Consulate in Kashgar.

So our Khotan trip is over. This journey through the deserts and oases of Central Asia was indeed an enjoyable experience. And Gillett was a pleasant companion. I sometimes think I am fundamentally unsocial. Most men and all unattractive women bore me to tears, though I try not to show it. But Gillett's company never palled on me, even though for three weeks we saw each other for every minute of the day—and night, for everywhere (except in Yarkand) we had to share a bedroom. And I hope my company did not pall on him. Gillett is stimulating to talk to. He has the most definite views on men and

things—more definite than I have or care to have—and expresses them most trenchantly—more trenchantly than I do or care to do. In politics, English, imperial and international, he is an unbending Tory. I do not allow myself to be drawn into an argument on such matters; for in High Toryism, as in high patriotism, there is an element of mysticism which transcends argument. Last evening Gillett told me how the late Sir Michael O'Dwyer had brought an action against an Indian 'seditionist' and won it. I did not tell him that the 'seditionist'[1] concerned, once President of the Indian National Congress, had been a Judge of the High Court, a Member of the Viceroy's Council, a Member of the Secretary of State's Council—and my father-in-law!

[1] The late Sir C. Sankaran Nair.

CHAPTER VI

KASHGAR

Kashgar, Monday, 23 October

I am glad I have at last reached a place where I can rest for a few days. I need some rest, as before me lies a journey of a thousand miles to Urumchi. I think I have earned it too after 77 days of nomadic existence. During this period I used every means of locomotion—car, boat, tonga, station wagon, aeroplane, horse, yak, my flat and blistered feet and even a doli in which the Binns babies were carried to Kashgar. I lived in every kind of building—rest-houses, infested with flies and sand-flies; mud huts from which sheep and yak had been hastily turned out in order to provide accommodation for the Agent-General for India in China; rock shelters which let in flakes of snow; and akois from which I could see the Seven Sages. I had every kind of food—pulao and qurma, sea-slugs, sheep's sinews, the web of duck's feet and enormous Turki *rotis*, one week old and hard as rock. I tasted every kind of liquid—spring water, well water, tank water, water from clear streams and muddy rivers, Russian vodka, Karnal gin and Karghalik liqueur. For baths—when one had them at all—one used a canvas tub 24 inches in diameter and 18 inches in height.

And now I find myself installed in a delightful house with fly-proof rooms, English baths, long mirrors, Russian tea sets and Khotan, Aqsu and Turfan carpets. Abetted by Gillett, I decided to give myself up to the luxury of it all for one day. Last evening officialism threatened to engulf me; for within five minutes of our arrival, unkempt and unwashed, Mr Kung, the Administrative Superintendent of Kashgar, the District Magistrate and

the Chief of Police called. Strictly speaking, I should have returned their call today; but for 24 hours Luxury has me in her lap, smothering my allegiance to her rival, Duty.

I amused myself by reading the papers. In this last outpost on the cadre of the Indian Political Service I found as many English papers as in any of the District Headquarters in India—*The Times* Weekly Edition, the *Illustrated London News*, *Blackwood's* magazine, the *Statesman*, *Picture Post*, *Country Life*, *Lilliput* and *Punch*. This completed the English atmosphere of this house.

Kashgar, Tuesday, 24 October

The morning was taken up with official calls. At 10 we called on the Administrative Superintendent; at 11 on the Soviet Consul-General; and at 12 on the Commissioner of Customs. We were half an hour late for our first call as Gillett was delayed by a haircut. He assured me, however, that in China time did not matter. There is a charming, but occasionally embarrassing, informality in the manner the Chinese keep their engagements. Once we had asked certain friends to dinner. We waited for half an hour for one of them who had accepted our invitation and then, thinking that he must have forgotten about it, we went in to dinner. When we were half-way through, he turned up. He told us that he had accepted two other invitations on the same evening. He had been to those two and had had a course or two at each house. In our own house he would content himself with pudding and savoury. On another occasion, a friend, who had expressed his inability to accept our invitation, felt better on the day of our dinner and turned up. It was a little awkward. It made our party 13; moreover, our table could only hold 12. The resourceful Mehta,[1] who had

[1] Capt. A. N. Mehta, Second Secretary to the Agent-General for India in China.

been mixing and serving drinks, suddenly developed a headache and retired to his bedroom.

Side by side with this informality the Chinese also observe a rigid formality in certain matters. The chief guest must always be placed facing the door (lest, in the old days, he should be stabbed in the back); and the further up you lead him in the drawing-room the greater honour you do him. At the dining table the chief guest takes the head of the table facing the door, and the host sits at the bottom. Next to the chief guest, in strict order of seniority, the other guests take their places. Even in an informal party no departure from precedence is permitted. Once we asked Monsieur Paniushkin, the Soviet Ambassador, one of the most charming members of the Diplomatic Corps in Chungking, and his wife; Dr Victor Hoo, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs; and M. Minovsky, the Czechoslovakian Minister, to dinner. Anujee sat in the centre on one side of the table and Mme Paniushkin on the other; by Anujee's side sat M. Paniushkin and M. Minovsky; and to the right and left of Mme Paniushkin, Dr Victor Hoo and myself. It fitted in well, as Mme Paniushkin spoke no English, and the only person who could speak to her in Russian was Dr Victor Hoo. Latimer[1] told me later that I had made a mistake as the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs ranked above the Minister of a foreign country and that Dr Victor Hoo might take this to heart. Whether he did or not, I do not know. If he did, the only way in which he showed it was by calling a Grand Slam at Bridge and making it!

The Administrative Superintendent, Mr Kung P'ei-lieh, on whom we called this morning, bears an honoured name—the same family name as the great Chinese pilgrim, Fa-hsien. Like the former Tupan, General Sheng

[1] Mr C. R. Latimer, Secretary to the Agent-General for India in China.

Shih-ts'ai, he hails from Manchuria. In fact, amongst the officials we have met in southern Sinkiang, we saw quite a number of Manchurian émigrés. Mr Kung struck me as a very pleasant but very tired official; he is not in good health; he cannot drink, he said, nor can he eat meat. When I asked whether good vegetables could not be had in Kashgar he said mournfully: 'What are vegetables without meat?' To a Chinese, life without meat and drink is not worth living. Mr Kung is suffering from high blood-pressure and seems anxious to retire. Whether the eclipse of General Sheng Shih-ts'ai has raised his blood-pressure I do not know.

At 11 we called on M. Schesterikov, the Soviet Consul-General. He treated us to a delicious Andijani wine, which tasted like sherry. Soviet representatives abroad keep excellent cellars. The best cellar in Chungking is that of the Soviet Embassy, with the Australian Legation a near second.

Conversation with the Soviet Consul-General had to be conducted through interpreters. However, this was not too great an impediment to conversation, partly because the Chinese interpreters were so efficient and partly because the relations between the British and Soviet Consuls-General were so cordial.

Sitting between these two dignitaries I reflected on the vicissitudes of the two Consulates in Sinkiang. Russia was the first to enter the field. Under the Treaty of St Petersburg, 1881, Russia obtained the right to appoint Consuls in certain towns in Sinkiang. Shortly afterwards, she exercised this right by appointing M. Petrovsky as Russian Consul in Kashgar. From 1881 to 1917 Russian influence was dominant in Sinkiang. Between 1917 and 1925 Russia lost her position in Sinkiang largely owing to her internal troubles; and even the Russian Consulates ceased to exist between 1922 and 1924. In 1925 Russian Consulates were reopened; and from 1933, when the

Soviet Government helped General Sheng Shih-ts'ai to quell the Tungan rebellion, Russia not only regained her position but played a vital part in the political and economic life of the country through Russian Advisers and the Sovsintorg, the Soviet Trade Agency in Sinkiang. In 1942, however, the Advisers were withdrawn; and trade between Russia and Sinkiang came to a standstill.

The first British Consul to be appointed to Sinkiang was Sir Francis Younghusband in 1890. He was followed by Sir George Macartney who remained as Consul-General in Kashgar for 28 years (1891-1919). Since then the post of Consul-General has been held mainly by officers of the Indian Political Service and occasionally by officers of the China Consular Service.

An American author, Owen Lattimore, has made some interesting observations, in his book *High Tartary*, on the former Russian and British diplomatic methods in Sinkiang. 'The most cursory reading', he says, 'establishes the remarkable contrast in, for instance, Russian and British methods and temperament: Col. Bell, V.C., or Capt. Younghusband (as he then was) traversing the whole of China, Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan with only one or two chance-picked followers, Chinese or Turki, while the Russian explorers, like Prejevalsky, never moved without a squad of armed Cossaks; or the famous Russian Consul, Petrovsky, with his detachment of Cossaks and his parade of force, as against Macartney, the equally famous and more reputable British representative who, alone and unsupported, gradually won the confidence and accord of the Chinese officials by his integrity and invariable "soundness".'

At noon we called on Mr Chang Hung-k'uei, Commissioner of Customs. Until recently the provincial Government used to enjoy autonomy in customs matters; now the Central Government has taken over the Customs Department, introducing their own tariff and

The fact is that the Turki dance is essentially a dance of the oasis, soft and voluptuous; while the Hunza dance has the wild rhythm of its own home 'where the boulders and the snow lie' and 'the baffling mountain-eddies chop and change'.

Kashgar, Thursday, 26 October

How differently the same place affects different persons! Mirza Haider wrote of Kashgar as follows: 'The inhabitants of towns who go there regard Kashgar as a wild country, while the people of the steppes consider it a refined city. It is a sort of Purgatory between the Paradise of towns and the Hell of deserts.... In a word it is free from the discord of men and the trampling of hoofs; and it is a safe retreat for the contented and the rich. Great blessings accrue to the pious from the blessed saints who lived there in the past. From two pious persons, out of the many I have seen, I have heard that when people migrate from Kashgar to some other they cannot find the same peace of mind; for they remember Kashgar with regret.'

Very different was the impression produced by Kashgar on Lord Dunmore. 'It is as desolate, dirty and uninteresting-looking a city' he says, 'as can possibly be imagined ... a series of yawning abysses; roads full of gaping chasms; tumbled down mud houses; obsolete cemeteries ... always either swimming in mud or smothered in dust; and what offends the eye still more is the one uniform melancholy tint of dirty drab that pervades the whole atmosphere.'

With these contradictory views in mind I proceeded to explore Kashgar City. I was told that the best spot from which I could get a bird's-eye view of Kashgar was the top of Keng Kung's temple. No one here was able to enlighten me as to who Keng Kung was. When

Sir Percy Sykes visited this temple in 1915 it was known as Pan Chao's temple; and the pool at the foot of the temple is undoubtedly 'Pan Chao's springs' to which there are frequent references in Chinese history.

Pan Chao is one of the most romantic figures in Chinese history. Originally he was a clerk, but he was not born to be one. 'Why should I weary myself forever with a miserable pen and ink?' he said. Proceeding to Kashgar in A.D. 73, he reduced the Kings of Turkestan. With an army of 70,000 he crossed the T'ien Shan and encamped on the shores of the Caspian Sea; and the whole of the country up to the Caspian, including 50 kings, acknowledged Chinese overlordship. He returned to China in A.D. 103 after 30 years' frontier service in the west.

Pan Chao's temple was destroyed by invaders over and over again. In the seventies of the last century Yaqub Beg razed it to the ground; but when the Chinese regained control of Kashgar, they had it rebuilt. In 1933, the Tungans, who staged a revolt against the Chinese, destroyed the images in the temple and flung them out; and the Chinese have not cared to restore them.

One object, however, has defied the fury of man. At the foot of the temple is a beautiful pool of water, known as the Springs of Pan Chao. The story goes that on one occasion Pan Chao was besieged by his enemies in Kashgar; and the water supply was cut off. The great General stamped on the ground, whereupon a spring gushed out and the army was saved.

I visited Pan Chao's temple not only for its intrinsic interest but also for the view it commands. From there I could survey the whole city—a vast collection of flat-roofed mud dwellings. Here and there one could see shrines and mosques, most of which partook of the neighbouring squalor though one or two raised their heads above it. Surrounding the city was the slave-built wall into which, so the story goes, the bodies of the slaves who

died at their work were driven in order to give it additional strength. This wall, with the moat around it, reminded me of the mud fort of Bharatpur which was the last in Rajputana to surrender to the British and against which even the forces of Lord Lake, who had conquered Delhi and Agra, dashed themselves in vain. Unlike the inner moat of Bharatpur, but like its outer moat, the Kashgar moat was dry. On one side of the city was the Tuman River; and on the other side the Qizil Su, or Red River, so called from the colour of the water. Beyond them lay the hills; and on a fine day one could see the Kunlun Range and the T'ien Shan or 'the Heavenly Mountains'.

It was dusk. Day was merging into night. The moon rose through the dust haze, 'a white and shapeless mass'. The poplars around Pan Chao's pool were shedding their golden leaves like a woman who puts by her golden ornaments, one by one. And the willows were weeping by their side. The temple itself, despoiled and desecrated, built and rebuilt over and over again, seemed to be a symbol of the history of Kashgar which from time to time has been raped by the Huns, White Huns, Tibetans, Uigur Turks and Turkis.

Kashgar filled Mirza Haider with reverence and Lord Dunmore with disgust. It filled me with sorrow. If towns had spirits, the Spirit of Kashgar would stand where I did on this grey October evening, and thinking of all that she had endured through the centuries, sing the autumnal song of Hsin Chi-chi, simple and touching as a sigh:

When I was young and a stranger to sorrow
I loved to gaze from a high terrace
I loved to gaze from a high terrace
To give my new poems a spice of sorrow.
Now I have drained sorrow to the bottom
I can find no words for it;
I can find no words for it;
But merely say, What a nice cool autumn!

Gillett with the Khotan Taot'ai (a Tungan) in 1937

M. C. Gillett

The Drive, H.M. Consulate-General, Kashgar at its lushest

Kashgar types

Kashgar, Friday, 27 October

I visited Hazrat Apak's shrine, the most famous shrine in Kashgar and perhaps in all Sinkiang. Hazrat Apak, or to give him his secular name, Hidayatulla, was one of the Khojas from Samarkand who ruled over Kashgar at once as kings and saints for many years in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Accompanied by Raza Ali, the very competent and very likeable Head Clerk of the British Consulate, I drove in a horse carriage to the shrine. A mile or two after leaving the Kashgar city we entered a vast graveyard. I take a morbid interest in cemeteries, burials and funerals. I remember the funeral of 'Muttoo', the younger brother of the Maharaja of Bharatpur, who died in 1940 soon after his return from England—the Maharaja's distress and his sister's paroxysm of grief and the dignified, affectionate and yet embarrassed manner in which Herbert Thompson,[1] whom it was always a pleasure to work with, tried to assuage it; the procession through Bharatpur City, headed by the Nabalighs and the Jaswant Household Infantry; the long drive to sacred Goverdhan; the interminable ceremonies; and the ghee-fed perfumed funeral pyre springing up and consuming that frail and handsome body. I also remember how, a few days later, when his last remains were taken out to be thrown into the Jumna, the J. H. I. Band suddenly struck up the tune 'Auld Lang Syne'. It reminded me of one of the late Lord Curzon's experiences. Once he attended a wedding when the following hymn was sung:

> Days and moments quickly flying
> Blend the living with the dead.

Lord Curzon wondered why such a funereal hymn had been chosen for a festive occasion but appreciated its appropriateness when the next two lines were sung:

> Soon shall you and I be lying
> Each within our narrow bed.

[1] J. H. Thompson, then Political Agent, Eastern Rajputana States.

The only person who, besides myself, could recognize 'Auld Lang Syne' at Muttoo's funeral was Cruickshank.[1] Before long he himself followed Muttoo to the grave. I remember with what fortitude Mrs Cruickshank conducted herself and directed every detail of the burial operations. She had been a missionary; and her fortitude came from her conviction that she and her husband would again meet before God. Christianity, even higher Christianity, unlike higher Hinduism, encourages an anthropomorphic conception of God. Whatever may be its philosophic validity, it certainly offers comfort to poor mortals walking in the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

Another cemetery which I used to visit often was the one at Fort Sandeman. The inscriptions on its tombstones were grim—Major Finnis, Political Agent, Fort Sandeman, murdered on his way to Manikhwa; so-and-so stabbed to death by a fanatic at Moghalkot, and so on. As in all military cemeteries, there was an empty grave; and Anujee and I often used to wonder who would be its occupant. We little dreamt that it would be my successor, Major Barnes, who was murdered by a disgruntled Pathan.

There was something private and intimate about these cemeteries. One could almost hear the tug of the heart-strings behind those inscriptions on tombstones. Very different was the cemetery we passed through today. It lay on both sides of the road, extending as far as eye could see. There were hundreds of tombs, mostly indistinguishable from one another, and bearing no inscriptions. Made of mud they merged with the dust-laden atmosphere and the dust-coloured horizon. Here we were not in the presence of deceased individuals but an army of the dead.

We entered the compound of Hazrat Apak's shrine through an imposing gateway which reminded me of the Buland Darwaza in Fatehpur Sikri and the beautiful

[1] For 30 years Chief Engineer, Bharatpur State.

inscription which it bears: 'This world is a bridge; pass over it but do not build on it.' Inside the compound again we saw numerous tombs. Here used to rest Yaqub Beg who originally came in the wake of one of the Khojas from Samarkand, ousted them and then ruled over Kashgar and southern Sinkiang in the seventies of the last century. When the Chinese re-established their rule they destroyed his tomb and flung away his remains. Little did Yaqub Beg reckon, when he destroyed Pan Chao's temple, that two could play at the same game.

The central shrine had a facade, covered with blue and white tiles bearing Arabic inscriptions. The shrine itself had been locked up; and it took some time before the keeper appeared with the key. Here too there were a number of tombs surrounding the central shrine of the great Priest-King. They looked ill-cared-for and were covered with dust and the droppings of birds. When Sir Percy Sykes visited the tomb in 1915 he saw numbers of flags and banners before the tomb. We saw none.

On one side of the shrine we saw a palanquin. According to some persons, a great-grandson of Apak's had travelled in it to and from Peking where his daughter was married to a Chinese. Owen Lattimore, however, has in his *High Tartary* related a story which connects this palanquin and shrine by a romantic thread with the mosque erected by Emperor Ch'ien Lung at a corner of the Forbidden City in Peking. This Emperor subjugated the petty Mohammedan states south of the T'ien Shan; and among the prisoners of war was a young Muslim woman from Kashgar whom he adopted as his concubine. He became so fond of her that he erected a mosque for her. It has been suggested that this young lady belonged to the Khoja family and that on her death the palanquin in the shrine carried her dead body back to Kashgar.

On the mosque of Ch'ien Lung there is a tablet, bearing an inscription in four languages. The Chinese part was

written by the Emperor himself and bears his own seal. The Emperor was a great scribe and is said to have written more than 30,000 pieces of verse—like the present Nizam of Hyderabad who occasionally issues his Firmans in poetry. In the poem inscribed on the mosque, Ch'ien Lung has extolled the virtues of Islam and even condescended to acknowledge the Prophet as his own equal. It runs:

What is the Kaaba?
What is the Heavenly Hall?
It is the mysterious shrine
Of the Moslems near my Palace Gate.
The City is Mecca,
Their ancestor is Mohammed.
He gave them the Quran
And handed down justice.
Those volumes of classics
Are entrusted to the Ahungs.[1]
Bowing West or bowing North[2]
Alike show one respect.
These steps of marble and beams of wood
Are the works of officials of the Public Works.
As stars move round the pole,
All nations follow us.

Kashgar, Saturday, 28 *October*

So far I have been having a delightfully studious rest here, browsing on Marco Polo's travels, Hsuan Tsang's memoirs, Aurel Stein's discoveries, more modern books on Central Asia and *Pleasing Poetry*—an anthology by Gillett. But the remainder of my stay here is going to be a series of social engagements. They have already started. Last night Mr Kung gave a dinner which was partly in

1 Mullahs.

2 'The Emperor always sits facing south, consequently all Chinese officials bow north. The Moslems in China bow to the west towards Mecca. The Emperor classes both acts together and thus makes himself equal to Mohammed.'—Broomhall's *Islam in China*.

my honour. Gillett was, of course, present with Binns, his Medical Officer and Vice-Consul and Ch'ü, the Chinese Secretary. Apart from Mr Kung only three Chinese officials were present. The Soviet Consular staff, headed by M. Schesterikov, was there in full force; there were six of them. I was at first surprised at this preponderance of Russians; but I soon learnt that the party was as much to welcome the newly-arrived Soviet Vice-Consul as to welcome me.

The dinner was Chinese in the number of courses and the length of time (three hours) it took. But there were certain European touches which reminded me that Russia was near. Instead of chopsticks there were knives and forks; instead of steaming hot towels there were serviettes; and instead of seating me, the chief guest, opposite to Mr Kung, as is the Chinese custom, he seated me to his right, in the European fashion. The fare too was Sino-Anglo-Russian. The Russian element was represented by vodka; the English, by mutton chops; and the Chinese, by sea-slugs.

There was one stoic figure at the dinner, Binns. He sat throughout the three hours' dinner without uttering a single word or eating a single morsel. It is impossible to imagine a greater contrast than Gillett and Binns. Gillett is a man of the world. Conservative in his views he is cosmopolitan in his tastes. Amongst the Chinese he can be more Chinese than the Chinese themselves. Binns, on the contrary, is intensely and incurably insular. He has no use for those polite forms of speech in which the Chinese excel and which have become a second nature to Gillett. Binns has a caustic tongue under which Gillett, the irrepressible, himself sometimes wilts. As for food he prefers roast beef to sea-slugs. He does not like Chinese food; and there's an end of the matter. He does not

see any reason why he should eat food which he does not like, nor does he see any reason why he should overcome this distaste by prolonged self-discipline. Life is too short for that sort of thing. Yet this very English Englishman and his equally English wife loved Cannanore, where he had two spells of duty, and would like nothing better than to spend the rest of their lives in Malabar.

Kashgar, Sunday, 29 October

Yesterday, there was a tremendous dust-storm. It began soon after midday and continued late into the night. All evening the wind howled disconsolately like those unsatisfied ghosts who used to people my imagination in my childhood and were more real to me—especially in the nights—than mortal men. The poplars swayed in the wind as we did in Khotan after Mr Li Wei Fang's dinner; and

> the leaves dead
> Were driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
> Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
> Pestilence-stricken multitudes.

It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good. Yesterday's was not an ill wind; for it lifted the dust haze and enabled me to get a glimpse of the T'ien Shan or Heavenly Mountains. From the roof of 'Chini Bagh', from which Mrs Thompson-Glover[1] watched the Tungan rebels being pursued by Chinese troops and was shot at and wounded, I obtained my first glimpse of the T'ien Shan. It looked as if it had been flood-lit; the morning sun seemed to light it up and nothing else. The hills in front were still wrapped up in a haze of dust; and there were black overhanging clouds. Between the hills and the clouds the Heavenly Mountain, crowned with snow, did indeed look heavenly; it looked like a silver garland

[1] Wife of the British Consul-General, Kashgar.

on the brow of heaven. Within a few minutes the sky put on her dusty veil once more; and the Heavenly Mountain retired into its own sphere.

Today the Indian traders in Kashgar—there are only half a dozen of them, doing little business—invited me to luncheon at 'the Hindu Serai'. Formerly there used to be Hindu serais in all the more important oases in southern Sinkiang. They have gone with the wind, like the Hindus themselves; and the Hindu Serai in Kashgar too is all but deserted. However, our hosts had beautified it by hanging carpets everywhere—Khotan, Kirghiz and Persian carpets on the floor, the walls and the ceiling. The leading Indian trader, Pandit Biharilal, struck me as more a Pandit than a trader. He is proficient in Sanskrit, quotes the *Bhagavadgita* by the yard, composes poems in Hindi (and did so in my honour), has a smattering of English and is collaborating with Gillett in preparing a Turki grammar. He is a staunch vegetarian; but this did not prevent him from giving us an excellent non-vegetarian meal.

I spent the evening with Raza Ali and Ghulam Sarwar of the British Consulate staff. I enjoyed the dinner and particularly the pulao, curries and kabob made under Mrs Raza Ali's supervision. She wore a lovely red sari with an enormous Surat border, such as those which Anujee likes. I admire Mrs Raza Ali's pluck in coming to Kashgar from Lahore over the most strenuous mountain trail in the world with two children, one aged three years and the other three months. Perhaps she had heard of Turki women! Many of Raza Ali's predecessors and colleagues have succumbed to their charms. Even non-Muslims fall, for recently a Parsee, who used to be wireless operator in the Consulate here, returned to Bombay with a Turki wife. But, as the proverb has it, 'When man and woman are agreed what can the Qazi do?'

Kashgar, Monday, 30 *October*

A middle-aged bachelor is to me always an object of wonder, for I myself plunged straight out of college into matrimony. Yet in college I thought I would keep away from it for at least ten years; and for this reason I sedulously avoided meeting 'that not impossible she', though for some months she and I lived within a stone's throw of each other in England. But the moment I returned to India I succumbed.

I always marvel at a bachelor's flair for housekeeping. I ran a Frontier District for two years and an Indian State for three; but I dread the thought of having to run our house in Chungking for two months before Anujee rejoins me at the end of January. Yet bachelors are often experts in housekeeping. The secret of a bachelor's success in domestic matters lies in his humility. He feels, as Gillett often tells me, that with a wife he could look after his guests infinitely better. He therefore sets himself out to play the role of both host and hostess, like a widower who tries to be mother as well as father to his motherless children.

Gillett is a perfect host and this house is exceedingly well run. Its twin propellers are both Chinese. Both hail from Peking; and both have been with Gillett for fifteen years. Han bears the modest designation of No. 1 boy; but he is much more. Gillett consults him on all matters of ceremony. Han is the Chief Adviser on Matters of Etiquette, the Grand Distributor of Tips and Presents; and he conducts himself in a manner befitting his dignity.

The other propeller is the cook. He turns out excellent English dishes. He can turn out an excellent Chinese meal too; but with three weeks' devastating Chinese meals behind us and another three weeks of them ahead of us, we are sticking to plain English food. The cook revels in variety. I have been here for seven days and

have not had eggs cooked in the same way twice. The dinners are superb. The lunch is, according to Chinese and Indian standards, a little light. Gillett told me a story against himself. The Binns family had been staying with him; and at lunch one of the children turned to Mrs Binns and said 'Mummy, aren't we going to have pudding?'. And the other child sharply rebuked him saying, 'Don't be stupid! Don't you know that in this house we don't get puddings?'

At a dinner party given by Gillett to the Soviet Consul-General and Mme Schesterikov, the cook excelled himself. So did Gillett. The Russians were perfectly at home and broke out into music after dinner. Mme Schesterikov is, as Gillett says, 'a perfect dear'. She has such natural grace and poise that, if Soviet Russia had not exterminated that species, one would have thought her an aristocrat. Perhaps, under the red complexion of many a Russian, blue blood still runs.

After dinner, M. Schesterikov showed me some Russian pictures. One was a lifelike portrait of Maxim Gorki, the Russian writer, by Brodsky. 'Gorki', said the Russian Consul-General, 'is our Russian Tagore'. Whether the description is apt or not, I felt pleased that Tagore should be so well known in Europe.

Another arresting picture was Repin's 'Ivan the Terrible and his Son'. Ivan has just murdered his son in a fit of anger. He is overcome by remorse and horror; and we see him in the picture frantically, but vainly, trying to stop the gush of blood from the mortal wound he had inflicted on his son. The expression on the father's face is the more excruciating in contrast with that of his son, lying inanimate in his arms. This picture won instant acclaim as a masterpiece but was banned by the Czar on account of its obvious political implications.

Kashgar, Tuesday, 31 *October*

Accompanied by Raza Ali, I made an expedition to the Mazar of Bibi Anna, some seven miles from here. We were in a posta,[1] driven by 'Tungan', so called because it was given to Mrs Thompson-Glover by the Tungans as compensation for the wound she sustained. The Tungan is now past work; he is more a historical relic of the Tungan rebellion than a serviceable horse. He did not appreciate the picnic to the Mazar of Bibi Anna. He had to take us over a very rough road, full of ruts, and across the Tuman Su River, knee-deep in mud. He fumed and fretted and shied and every now and then turned back to Kashgar. Then the syce would get down from his lofty seat and whip him and pull him straight and lead him on. Hardly would the syce clamber back to his seat when Tungan would again execute a right-about-turn to Kashgar. However, we reached the Mazar by midday.

I went to this shrine with considerable curiosity, as it was the first shrine of a Muslim female saint I had ever visited—unless one included Mumtaz Mahal, 'the Lady of the Taj', in this category. Mumtaz Mahal was a worldly saint and as deserving of immortality as any saints, Hindu, Muslim or Christian, who have abjured the world. She was a devoted wife and a great Empress. She accompanied her husband, Emperor Shah Jehan, on all his expeditions, military and political. And she presented him with thirteen children. In presenting him with the fourteenth, she overreached herself and died. And it was she who inspired that 'poem in marble', the Taj Mahal. Bibi Anna's tomb is not made of marble but of mud. No Jumna flows past her resting-place, but a muddy irrigation channel, which, so the locals said, was constructed by Hazrat Apak. No cypresses and flowering shrubs embower her tomb. No mosque of

[1] A horse carriage.

red sandstone and gleaming marble rises above her remains. Recently, however, the villagers have constructed a mud mosque, towards which the Government contributed a sack of wheat.

Yet Bibi Anna's tomb is as well known in these parts as the Taj Mahal in India. On a certain day at the end of the harvesting season, as many people assemble here as—to use a homely simile of one of the villagers—flies in summer. I saw various offerings, including horns of wild sheep, presented apparently by Kirghiz tribesmen. In particular, women who are anxious to have a child come and pray here. The manner in which they ask for the saint's blessings is unique. They put their hands into a hole by the side of the tomb and take up whatever comes up—a bead, an ant, a worm or a stone. And they put it reverently between their breasts and pray for a child.

Who was this Bibi Anna at whose shrine even the great Hazrat Apak used to worship? I could get no reliable information. There is, however, no lack of legend about her. We sat on a little terrace and listened to the local legends. Bibi Anna's mother came from Egypt. When she was *enceinte* she could hear a voice in her womb saying 'La Ilaahilallah' (There is no God but Allah). She confided this to her husband; but he was addicted to drink and gambling and would not believe her. She asked him to place his ear on her stomach and listen and he did indeed hear the holy words. Thereafter he gave up his evil habits and lived a virtuous life. In due course the child was born. In the daytime the child remained in the house; but in the night, the cradle with the baby disappeared. Evidently the child had daily communion with God. At the age of 14 Bibi Anna's mother sent her on an errand to the bazaar. She had grown into a girl of ravishing beauty; and one of the rich men in the village cast lustful eyes on her. This made her feel utterly humiliated; and she went back home, weeping and praying.

For three years she did not stir out. Then the Call car She left her house, built a langar for herself in the des and remained there, spending her time in prayer a meditation. She would, however, offer rest and refre ment to tired wayfarers in the desert. On one occasi forty saintly men came into her langar. As was her wo she used to give them a meal; but there was no firewoc She went into her room, shut the door, and put into t fire her own feet which served as firewood. While she w thus cooking the meal, she felt that someone was looki at her with that lustful look which she first encounter in the bazaar at the age of 14. She felt humiliated th her body could still evoke such desire in the hearts of me She had no more use for life. She came out and a nounced that in three days she would go back to t Creator. And she did.

I left Bibi Anna Mazar with mingled thoughts abo faith and reason, religion and superstition. Socrat analysed prayer into 'the art of asking and giving'; a that is what it has become in most countries. Sykes h given the following specimen of a prayer of a Musli woman at one of the sacred shrines in Sinkiang. 'O Alla O Lord of the Shrine,' she cries, 'grant me a house wit a kettle ready placed on the stove and a spoon in the kettl May it be a house with its four sides decorated with clot with rugs and carpets spread, and with towels hangir from the pegs. Grant me a husband whose father an mother are dead; and may he have no other wife!'

Tungan gaily took us back to Kashgar. In the jo of the prospect of getting back home, he even forgot h old age. While approaching Kashgar, however, I decide to go on to Ali Arslan's shrine. Here Tungan put his foc down. It was the last straw; and he decided to nor co-operate once and for all. No amount of coaxin and goading and whipping would make him budge. S Raza Ali and I got down from the carriage and walke

to the shrine through the dusty streets of Kashgar City, along the poplar-lined bank of Qizil Su and through the gardens which are the property of the shrine.

Ali Arslan, unlike Bibi Anna, is a historical figure. To give him his full name, Sultan Arslan Boghra was one of the earliest and most redoubtable crusaders of Islam in Central Asia. The Buddhist kingdom of Khotan, however, was in no mood to change its religion and resisted the tide of Islam with all its might and main. It is said that the last battle against Arslan was won by Khotan largely as a result of the advice tendered by a Nestorian priest. At that time the Nestorian Church had its adherents throughout Asia; and one of the priests counselled the Buddhists to fall upon the Muslims at dawn, when they would be engaged in their religious devotions, and thus take them unawares. This advice was followed; and in a great battle at Ordam-Padshah, some fifty miles to the south-east of Kashgar, the Muslims were beaten and Ali Arslan was slain. His body was buried at Ordam-Padshah, but his head was carried by his followers to Kashgar and buried in the shrine which I visited.

That head continues to inspire respect and work miracles; for the keeper of the shrine told me that during the rebellion of 1934 one of the soldiers attempted to loot the shrine; and his right hand was stricken with paralysis.

Tungan, who in the meantime had relented, appeared at the shrine and brought us back to the Consulate. It was an interesting day for us and a strenuous one for Tungan.

Kashgar, Wednesday, 1 November

It being market day I strolled out into Kashgar City. Leaving the Consulate I entered Ch'in Su or 'the Pro-Soviet Street'. Curiously enough the street on which the British Consulate is situated is known by the first of

General Sheng Shih-ts'ai's 'Six Great Principles of Government', namely, Friendship with Soviet Russia. In a corner of this street I saw an old mendicant, sitting silent and solemn. I hate beggars; but about this man there was a pathetic distinction which made me give him 10 kochins. Mohamed Akhun, the Consulate Orderly, who had accompanied me all the way from Gilgit, was pleased. He told me that that man was an Andijani who was renowned for his piety. When, however, religion was at a discount in Andijan, he left the place and came to Kashgar. He was now reduced to penury; and any Andijani passing gave him a kochin or two.

A refreshing feature of Chinese, as compared with Indian, towns is the absence of beggars. In my nine months' stay in Chungking I did not see a single beggar. What a contrast to Delhi where beggars are such a nuisance! They spoil your shopping in Chandni Chowk, your picnic in Roshanara and your devotions in the Juma Masjid. The only place in India where, so far as I know, the beggar problem has been skilfully handled is Kottayam in Travancore. There the Municipal authorities have set up a House for Destitutes which is run by means of charitable contributions from the local citizens. 'Charity', to quote the motto of the Maharaja of Travancore, 'is our household divinity.' An Indian is naturally charitable; besides he thinks it is a passport to salvation. But his charity is often exercised indiscriminately. In Kottayam a commendable attempt has been made to canalize it.

In Kashgar City there are two buildings which stand out amongst a multitude of mud hovels—a mosque and a club. The club has a number of rooms, including a library and a very spacious stage and theatre, which can accommodate some 2,000 persons. The mosque is old and the club is new, built when Soviet influence was paramount. How far they neutralize, or supplement, each other I cannot say.

In front of the mosque and the club is a market square. Here men and women, veiled and unveiled, buy and sell. Here could be seen many of 'the Fourteen Races' of Sinkiang jostling against one another—bearded Tajiks, with their Aryan features; slant-eyed Kirghiz, looking forlorn without their yaks; indolent Turkis riding donkeys often no bigger than dogs; and handsome Andijanis on stalwart horses. Only one race is conspicuous by its absence—the ruling race, the Chinese. It is rare to see a Chinese face in the bazaar. Here as elsewhere most Chinese live in 'the New City'; and between the New City and the Old there is an even greater gulf than between Peshawar Cantonment and the City of Peshawar.

Apart from the human interest the bazaar was dull. For a city of some 200,000 souls, the articles offered for sale were few and limited. Among them were felt stockings, embroidered caps and cheap dyed cloth. I bought a few of these caps and sent them home, though these jaunty little caps will look somewhat comic on my long-haired and sari-wearing daughters.

Indo-Sinkiang trade is at a standstill. Indian trade can never compete with Russian. Sinkiang faces Russia and not India. Besides, communications between India and Sinkiang are primitive; and Nature will not permit a motor road, at any rate in my lifetime. Still there has for decades been a slender but useful volume of trade between India and Sinkiang. It was of advantage to both countries; and at present and in the long run it will be of greater advantage to Sinkiang than to India. The southern oases have been deriving spiritual sustenance in ancient times, and a certain amount of material benefit in recent times, from the stream of Indian intercourse. To let this stream dry up for ever is to condemn them to stagnation. And the penalty of stagnation is death.

The fact is that Sinkiang, to use a much abused phrase, is passing through a period of transition. All China is. The Revolution of 1911 was an epoch-making event. It swept away a system of Government which in its essence had remained unchanged for over two thousand years. It launched China into the thrills and perils of a new and uncharted sea. It is only recently that a navigator has appeared in the person of President Chiang Kai-shek who bids fair to steer China out of the stormy seas in which she has been floundering for a quarter of a century since the Revolution of 1911. While China was thus heaving with the Three People's Principles and Communism and anti-Imperialism and the rival ambitions of warlords, Sinkiang remained outside all commotion—'a quiet and attractive backwater on the stream of life'. Governor Yang Tseng-hsin, who guided the destinies of Sinkiang during the fateful years 1911-28, jealously preserved its autonomy *vis-à-vis* China as well as Russia and maintained a kind of political equilibrium. But, as Owen Lattimore, by no means unsympathetic to China, wrote in *High Tartary* in 1930 in words which were prophetic of the developments of succeeding years, 'no equilibrium, unfortunately, can last for ever. The pressure on Chinese Turkestan from the world at large, and especially from China itself, cannot be withstood indefinitely. When the Frontier breaks and new factions of Chinese invade the province, a period of rivalry and exploitation will begin. The subject peoples will be lucky if they escape miseries which they never knew under the old autocracy; and the upshot of affairs in that remote intermediary land between the Far East and the Near East is unpredictable, what with the conflicting interests of many minor peoples and the unceasing pressure, as it were impersonal and foreordained, of the two major races, Russians and Chinese.'

Kashgar, Thursday, 2 November

I shall carry with me pleasant memories of my stay in Chini Bagh. With its lawns and stately poplars and fruit trees and still lingering flowers, its splendid terrace, commanding a view of orchards, rice fields, the winding Tuman Su River and, on a clear day, the snowy peaks of the T'ien Shan, Chini Bagh was to me, as to many a distinguished (and undistinguished) Central Asian traveller, a haven of rest. It is a pity that a Guest Book is not kept in Chini Bagh as in the Mir's Guest House at Baltit. If there were one it would have contained an array of names of explorers, excavators, shikaris, globe-trotters, authors, journalists, administrators and diplomats. Amongst them one of the most distinguished would have been Sir Aurel Stein's. I saw from a letter which he wrote in his own clear handwriting to Gillett a few weeks before his death how keen was his interest in Chinese Turkestan up to the end of his life. Commending Gillett's proposal to install a dust gauge in the Consulate, Stein has expatiated on 'the important nexus between the deposition of dust and the formation of loess on the one hand and wind-erosion on the other'. He has also added wistfully that 'my thoughts often visit the Kashgar Consulate which, since Sir George Macartney's time, provided always a very helpful and ever hospitable base for my explorations'.

In the evening I had tea with the Raza Alis and met their charming children. Mrs Raza Ali had made some delicious *rasa gulas* for me. There was an incongruous pleasure in tasting Bengali sweets and hearing Tansen's music in a Central Asian oasis.

'Bengali sweets' reminded me of an interesting incident in the life of my father-in-law, the late Sir C. Sankaran Nair. 'The old bear on the hill', as he used to be known in Simla—he lived in 'Inverarm' on a hillock and was noted for his gruffness—gave a dinner to

the Viceroy. He had asked Sir Bhupendranath Basu to send some *rasa gulas* for the dinner. Basu did so from Calcutta and sent him a telegram: 'Bengali sweets dispatched.' In those days 'Bengali sweets' was a nickname for 'bombs' among the Bengali terrorists. The telegram fell into the hands of the police. It didn't matter that it was addressed to a Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council; had he not been President of the Indian National Congress? Nor did it matter that the sender was a Member of the Secretary of State's Council; he too had been President of the Congress. And so the police set about making secret inquiries; and it was not until the dinner to the Viceroy was safely over that the telegram and the sweets were delivered to Sir Sankaran.

Kashgar, Friday, 3 *November*

When I woke up, the morning seemed to be clad in silver grey. But now the silver is fading, the moon is about to set and the day is breaking. And the sun is rising parchment-faced like a husband who, after a late night's revels, gets wearily out of bed, wondering how to face his wife at breakfast.

Tomorrow I shall be leaving Kashgar for good. During the last twelve days I saw, read and heard a great deal about Kashgar. I have only one disappointment; I have been able to see nothing of its Buddhist antiquities. There is not much to see; even the ruined stupas which Stein saw some forty years ago are now hardly distinguishable. Yet Kashgar was once a Buddhist land. Legend has it that Kanishka, the founder of the Yuehchi dominion embracing what is now Afghanistan and north-western India, introduced Buddhism into Kashgar. Fa-hsien visited Kashgar; he made a special detour in order to attend the Pancha Parishad or the Quinquennial Assembly held by the King. 'When this is to be held',

says Fa-hsien, 'the king requests the presence of the Sramans from all quarters of the kingdom. They come as in clouds; and when they are all in session their place in the assembly is grandly decorated and the King and his ministers give them all sorts of precious things and articles which the Sramans require.' Another distinguished visitor to Kashgar at about the same time (A.D. 400) was the Indian sage, Kumarajiva, who translated a number of Buddhist sutras into Chinese. At his death, about A.D. 417, his body was cremated, but legend has it that his golden tongue remained unhurt in the midst of the fire. In Kashgar he is said to have placed on his head the miraculous alms bowl of Buddha. Hsuan Tsang too visited Kashgar. The people appear to have impressed him as unfavourably as they did Marco Polo. 'The disposition of the men', says Hsuan Tsang, 'is fierce and impetuous; and they are mostly false and deceitful. They make light of decorum and politeness and esteem learning but little.' Six centuries later Marco Polo remarked that 'they are a wretched, niggardly set of people; they eat and drink in miserable fashion'. In Hsuan Tsang's time Buddhism continued to be the religion in Kashgar; but, says he 'without understanding the principles they recite many religious chants'—a criticism which fits many a minister of religion even today.

It is sad to contemplate the fate which overtook Buddhism in China. In Sinkiang itself, it was overthrown by the sword of Islam. In the rest of China it died a natural death. By the tenth century it had become enfeebled; it no longer had that pristine vitality which carried it across the seas and mountains into many lands outside India. And the end was hastened by the revival of Confucianism which occurred in the twelfth century at the hands of the great Chinese philosopher, Chu-hsi. To the Chinese mind, practical, materialistic and pragmatic, the commonsense of Confucius made a far greater

appeal than the metaphysics of Buddha. True, during the sixth and seventh centuries, the mysticism, if not the metaphysics, of Buddhism did make an appeal to the hearts, if not to the heads, of the Chinese; but before long that 'this-worldliness', so characteristic of the Chinese, as compared with the Indian, mind, asserted itself; and China relapsed into the urbane philosophy of Confucius.

Nowhere was the commonsense attitude of the Chinese towards supernatural matters expressed more audaciously or with finer irony than in a memorial, submitted by Han Yu (A.D. 768-824), who was known as the Prince of Literature. His tablet has been placed in the Confucian temple, because, as Watters states in his *Guide to the Tablets in a Confucian Temple*, Han Yu 'stood out almost alone against the heresy of Buddhism which had nearly quenched the torch of Confucian faith'. In his Memorial to the King he protests vehemently against the proposal to install a bone of Buddha in the Imperial Palace. 'Your Majesty's servant', says Han Yu, 'would submit that Buddhism is but a cult of the barbarians and that its spread in China dates only from the late Han dynasty and the ancients know nothing of it.' After referring to the historical development of Buddhism, Han Yu goes on to say that 'Buddha was a barbarian. His language was not the language of China; his clothes were of an alien cut. He did not utter the maxims of our ancient rulers, nor conform to the customs which they have handed down. He did not appreciate the bond between Prince and Minister, the tie between father and son. Supposing, indeed, this Buddha had come to our capital in the flesh, under an appointment from his own state, Your Majesty might have received him with a few words of admonition, bestowing on him a banquet and a suit of clothes, before sending him out of the country with an escort of soldiers, and thereby have avoided any dangerous influence on the minds of the people. But what are the facts? The bone

of a man, long since dead and decomposed, is to be admitted, forsooth, within the precincts of the Imperial Palace! Confucius said "Pay all respect to supernatural beings, but keep them at a distance" . . . Yet now Your Majesty is about causelessly to introduce a disgusting object, personally taking part in the proceedings. . . . Of the officials, not one has raised his voice against it; of the censors, not one has pointed out the enormity of such an act. Therefore your servant, overwhelmed with shame, implores Your Majesty that this bone may be handed over for destruction by fire or water, whereby the root of this great evil may be extinguished for all time, and the people may know how much the wisdom of Your Majesty surpasses that of all ordinary men. The glory of such a deed will be beyond all praise. And should the Lord Buddha have power to avenge this insult by inflicting some misfortune, then let the vials of his wrath be poured out upon the person of your servant who now calls Heaven to witness that he will not repent him of his oath'.

Generally speaking, there was little persecution of Buddhism in China. No country has been more tolerant in religious matters than China. Here there were no massacres, no burnings and hangings of heretics. What brought about the eclipse of Buddhism was simply the revival of a system which was more congenial to the Chinese mind, Confucianism.

In Tibet Buddhism has survived, but only in name. The present-day Buddhism of Tibet is a strange caricature of the gospel of Buddha. Never before had I realized to what depths Buddhism had sunk than during the visit of Sir S. Radhakrishnan to China. The Rev. Cressy took him and me to see a 'Living Buddha from Tibet'. A large crowd had assembled to hear the conversation between the Living Buddha and the living philosopher. Was any attempt being made, asked Radhakrishnan, to reinterpret the teachings of Buddha in the light of modern

thought? It was like asking a village astrologer in India what he thought of the theory of Relativity! 'No,' mumbled the Living Buddha, 'we follow Gautama's teaching.' 'I understand,' said Radhakrishnan, 'your monasteries in Tibet are also universities, such as those we had in ancient India. If so, what is your curriculum?' 'We teach astronomy,' replied the Living Buddha. 'Quite so,' said Radhakrishnan, 'in India too science sprang from religion. But now we treat science as the objective study of phenomena. Is that attitude growing in Tibet?' 'Yes,' said the Living Buddha enthusiastically, 'we have separated white astronomy from black astronomy. We got white astronomy from India and black astronomy from China. By means of white astronomy we know when we should be specially careful in our lives, when some misfortune is likely to overtake us, etc. By black astronomy we know the auspicious dates for starting off on a journey, sowing of crops, building a house, and so on.' Radhakrishnan gave up the conversation in despair. The Living Buddha's admiring satellites doubtless thought that he had reduced the Indian philosopher to silence. It was a case of the twentieth century meeting the second, and neither seemed to know how deep was the gulf between them.

CHAPTER VII

ALONG THE HEAVENLY MOUNTAINS

X, Saturday, 4 November

THIS place must be marked as an 'X' for it has no name. Nor has it a local habitation. We are staying in a small mud hut which the benign Government has built for travellers. It is right in the middle of the desert. For miles around there are no people or houses. Indeed, since leaving the outskirts of Kashgar and Artush we did not, for a hundred miles, see any signs of life, except a couple of deer which darted across the road and ran parallel to our car for fully ten minutes. To our left were the Heavenly Mountains. Somehow they gave us a queer sense of security. But for them we should have felt like atoms on an ocean of space.

This morning, however, Gillett and I felt that we were more than atoms. We were persons who counted! At the first bridge outside Kashgar, the Administrative Commissioner, District Magistrate, Chief of Police and a number of other officers assembled to bid farewell to us. There, in the cold grey morning, they had been waiting for an hour.

We left Kashgar at about 7.30. Some 25 miles from Kashgar we passed a village called Artush. It looked like Quetta after the earthquake of 1935. Quetta which was built up in 30 years was reduced to dust in 30 seconds; and 30,000 of its citizens were buried in the debris. Similar in suddenness, but not in magnitude, a flood came down from the mountains last summer, swept away a number of houses, damaged the fields and drowned a good few villagers of Artush. I was told that not long ago a sacred shrine in this village had been turned into a

club where, instead of prayers, drinking and dancing were indulged in; and the local villagers regard the flood as a sign of divine wrath.

A hundred miles beyond Kashgar we saw a number of multicoloured hills to the left. They bore all colours, red, brown, yellow, cream and black. To the right was a vast expanse of tamarisk. We also saw a number of sand-dunes in process of formation. Sand collects round the tamarisk. The plant dies but leaves its roots behind. In due course the roots spring up into plants. More sand is gathered; more roots are thrown out; and thus a mound is formed which often reaches elephantine proportions.

It was getting late; and we were glad to see a mud hut at about the 125th mile into which we crept for the evening. Han produced an excellent dinner in the twinkling of an eye; and Gillett and I went to bed at about 8 wrapped in silence—the great silence of the desert. It was like the silence of a heart weighed down with some emotion which words cannot express

Aqsu, Sunday, 5 November

Silence reigned when we went to bed. What awakened me was the arrival of our escort lorry which the Chairman of the Provincial Government in Sinkiang had deputed to accompany us from Kashgar to Tihwa. In that lorry were travelling the wife of a General, a companion of hers and her children. This morning I discovered that they had all slept out in the open, with the temperature below freezing-point; and having arrived at midnight, they had left before dawn. The Chinese are indeed a tough people.

In Chungking I have often been amazed at the toughness of the Chinese. It is a daily sight to see a Chinese coolie carrying, up the innumerable steps of the Yangtze, a load which three Indian coolies would find it difficult

to bear. And I have often seen boatmen, bent double and on all fours, dragging overloaded boats and barges against the current up the Yangtze Kiang. It is this toughness which has enabled the Chinese, as a race, to survive famine, pestilence and political turmoils which used to recur with harrowing persistence.

This afternoon we saw the General's wife precariously perched on a heap of luggage in an open lorry and cruelly knocked about. By now we had entered a sandy stretch of road where the new motor road either did not exist or had been washed away. We therefore drove over an old cart road full of bone-breaking ruts. We passed a couple of oases without fields, and villages without vegetation Everything looked eerie in the gathering darkness.

We reached the Administrative Superintendent's residence at Aqsu at about 8 p.m. After a thirteen-hour journey with nothing to eat or drink except a slice of cake and a cup of tea without milk or sugar, we were cold, tired and hungry. By midnight, however, we were in high spirits. We had an excellent dinner and felt warm and comfortable. Russian vodka contributed to our internal, and a Russian heater to our external warmth. And from our cosy bedroom, I thought of the General's wife, still sitting under the starry sky, in an open overloaded lorry, with the temperature dropping below freezing-point and the bitter desert wind blowing against her face. Once more I take my hat off to the women of China. The women of India have an equal aptitude for endurance but not, I fear, the same capacity.

Yakarik, Monday, 6 November

We left Aqsu at about 9 and found that the streets, both in the Old and New Aqsu City, had been decorated with the national flags of China in honour of our arrival. All the officials assembled at the first bridge outside the

city to bid us farewell. All the school children including, to our pleasant surprise, schoolgirls, had lined up too and clapped their hands when we marched past them.

Leaving Aqsu cities, old and new, which are separate from each other almost like Old and New Delhi, we entered a city of the Dead. There were tombs of all sizes and shapes. In Aqsu the dead occupy the most commanding sites as if they still wanted to keep an eye on the doings of their living successors.

Soon after leaving Aqsu, I got a dim view of the T'ien Shan and its highest peak, Khan Tengri, 23,620 feet high. The snowy range was still partially wrapped up in haze; it looked like an underdeveloped picture taken by an amateur photographer. It was not a Heavenly Mountain which I saw today but a Ghostly Mountain.

We could not get to Bai, where we had proposed to spend the night, but had to stay in the police station in a small village called Yakarik, 30 miles to the south of Bai. While approaching Yakarik we saw some very interesting scenery—such scenery as I had not expected to come across in Sinkiang. We crossed a Pass; and from the top of the Pass we saw a vast stretch of sandy plain and beyond it what seemed a brick-red wall. We then crossed the brick-red wall by a narrow winding gorge. From a distance it had looked like the red wall of Akbar's Fort in Agra. But on coming closer we discovered that wind and sun had reduced this chain of hills to the most fantastic shapes. Gillett said that it was like an opium-smoker's dream. All creation was there in curious forms—waves of the sea standing up; tongues of fire springing forth from a funeral pyre; perpendicular walls; lotus domes like those of the Taj Mahal; hundreds of rock-cut cave temples as in Ellora; thousand-pillared mandapams as in Madura; benign Gods with bejewelled turbans and necklaces; Goddesses with breasts of alabaster; prehistoric monsters with their jaws wide open; and ghosts and

demons, some toothless and others jutting out their tongues. To the left was the ghostly mountain, more ghostly than ever in the twilight; to the right the sun was sinking in a pool of blood; and above us, in solitary glory, was the evening star to which Gillett and I took off our hats in reverence. It was a Walt Disney version of Nature's phantasmagoria.

Qizil, Tuesday, 7 November

I have never before—touch wood—had to sleep in a police station. Last night, however, we were most comfortable in the police station at Yakarik. Within a few minutes of our arrival we had a delicious meal of Turki kabob and (blissfully) nothing else. It reminded me of the small Muslim restaurant in Delhi in which Anujee used to refresh herself in the course of her all-day shopping expeditions to Chandni Chowk.

We slept in a room which had a *kang*, that is, a raised surface which was heated from beneath by lighting a fire under it. There Gillett and I discussed poetry. We wondered which of the English poets we would have liked to have as our companion on a trip like this. We came to the conclusion that most of them would have been insufferable.' It would have been particularly difficult to put up with those poets who fancied that they had a mission to perform. Milton would have gone about trying, and finding it hard, to justify the ways of God to Man. Tennyson would have been confirmed in his superior attitude: 'Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.' If I had to take a Victorian poet with me I would have preferred Browning to Tennyson. If Wordsworth had heard a bird sing after travelling in the desert for three hundred miles he would have exclaimed:

> Cuckoo, shall I call thee bird
> Or but a wandering voice?

And I might have been tempted to say, like the absent-minded professor in *Punch*,

> State the alternative preferred
> With reasons for your choice.

This trip would have killed consumptive Keats. Shakespeare would have got gloriously drunk on Russian vodka and Karghalik wine; and Byron might have challenged Gillett to a duel over that pretty dancer we saw on the stage in Keriya. I might have liked to have Burns as my companion; but Gillett objected to him. Gillett is too English to like a Scots poet and has not included a single one of his poems in his *Pleasing Poetry*. Gillett suggested that John Donne would be a good companion; but he is too metaphysical for me. I myself proposed Geoffrey Chaucer. Gillett agreed and we both finally voted for him.

A few miles outside Yakarik we crossed a stream full of duck. Mir Hamza went out and shot two duck for two cartridges. My thoughts went back to Bharatpur where we used to make preparations for months for the great duck-shoots—the greatest of all in India. In my three years in Bharatpur the biggest shoot yielded 2,400 birds—only! The record shoot was Lord Linlithgow's in 1937 when 39 guns shot down 4,200 birds. The individual record is, I believe, held by Todd, then Political Agent, Bharatpur, who shot down 360 birds in one day, with the Maharaja of Dholpur a close second. Another Political Officer holds the record in a different sense. It is usual to shoot more birds in the morning than in the afternoon. Gibson[1] did the reverse: he shot 1 in the forenoon and 2 in the afternoon!

We reached Bai shortly after 12. The District Magistrate, a newcomer with a beard like that of an adolescent Sikh, at first struck me as a most insignificant person. He would not utter a word and seemed to shrink into

[1] Sir Edmund Gibson, then Political Agent, Bharatpur.

himself. At lunch, however, he demonstrated his capacity for imbibing vodka. Under its genial warmth he turned into a tiger of a man dominating the table and monopolizing the conversation. He made a number of speeches and proposed and repeated a number of toasts, each of which gave him an opportunity for drinking another glass of vodka. At about 3.30, however, we tore ourselves away from our bibulous host and resumed our journey to Qizil, which we reached in about three hours.

Kuchar, Wednesday, 8 November

Last evening we had our first experience of Turki hospitality. Until then our hosts in the various places at which we halted were Chinese. In the small village of Qizil, however, there were no Chinese at all; and our host was the village headman (Ch'u Chang). He was also the owner of the biggest serai in Qizil. He vacated for us his own room in the serai, even though it led to his wife's room and she could not get in or get out of it except through ours. We spent a most comfortable night there with a stove which made the room almost too warm. The servants apparently had instructions not to let us be cold on any account. At about 2.30 in the morning, one of the servants came to our room, when we were fast asleep, lit the lamp and started lighting the stove; and I was awakened by Gillett's stentorian voice ringing out, 'Take away that bloody thing'.

This morning we visited the ancient cave paintings, some seven miles from Qizil. There is less to see than to stir up the imagination in these caves. The best paintings have been removed by European archaeologists and may be seen in the museums of Europe, particularly in Berlin. The rest have succumbed to the fury of man. The latest men to vent their blind wrath on these gracious paintings, which have survived the ravages

of time for thirteen centuries, were the Tungans in the course of their rebellion in 1933. Seeing the state of affairs here one feels all the more grateful to Lord Curzon who passed the Protection of Ancient Monuments Act and took vigorous measures to preserve the great works of art in India.

In the construction of the Qizil caves there is no such variety as in Ellora or Ajanta. The design of all the caves is more or less the same—a central shrine, where there must have been an image of Buddha, surrounded by a covered passage, sometimes high enough for a man to walk through and occasionally so low that one has to crawl, for the purposes of Pradakshina or perambulation. The sides of the caves and the ceiling are all elaborately painted.

M. Hacken has divided these paintings into two distinct styles—an earlier, dating from A.D. 450 to 650 and a later from A.D. 650 to 750. The earlier style is more delicate, more subtle and the colours are more subdued. The later paintings betray Sassanian influences. They are less impressive, because the artists were out to impress. They used bolder colours and attained cruder effects.

Though most of the paintings have disappeared one can still see here and there a few defaced but beautiful figures such as a group of Boddhisatwas, bowing their heads as if in pity for the vandals who put out their eyes, a lovely coloured cupola which the Tungans did not think it worth while to destroy, and a two-headed eagle with crossed serpents, a design which I had not seen before in Buddhist paintings.

We returned from the caves to the serai at Qizil, had more kabob and left for Kuchar at about 1. Before reaching Kuchar, we visited a few more Buddhist caves. They had been dug, not into the side of a single hill as in Qizil, but into a group of hills adjacent to and facing one another. Here too, there is little left to see, thanks to the

solicitude of foreign archaeologists, the indifference of the Manchu Government, and the bigotry of the Tungan rebels. What little there is left, however, shows that these paintings belonged to the earlier of the two schools represented in Qizil, and were incomparable in their beauty. Gillett drew my attention to the figure of a man on horseback—a fully accoutred knight on an elaborately caparisoned horse. The man and the horse were drawn with a sympathy and vigour which are rare even in Indian art.

Bugur, Thursday, 9 November

Kuchar was the first yamen in which we spent a night in a double-storied building. This was appropriate as we did want to be comfortable in this town of historic memories. Even today, watered by two large rivers, it is an important oasis with a population of about 150,000.

The District Magistrate, Mr Chao K'uei-sheng, used to be the Secretary of the Kuomintang Party. To me, nurtured in the traditions of the Indian Civil Service, it seems strange that a party official should be appointed District Magistrate. But in China today the crux of the political situation is that the Party constitutes the Government. It is the Kuomintang that rules the state. To foreigners this appears strange; for is it not, they ask, contrary to all democratic conceptions for a single party to govern the state without a clear mandate from the nation? The Chinese answer to this is that this is a temporary, but inevitable, stage. China has to be prepared for democracy. The reason for the initial failure of democratic experiments in China after the Revolution of 1911 was that the people did not know what democracy was. The Chinese often describe themselves as 'a tray of loose sand'. They had to be subjected to discipline and welded into rock before there could be a democracy. And the Kuomintang has undertaken this role.

Mr Chao may be described as a young man with an old head and very old-fashioned manners. His mannerisms, his studied gestures, his deliberate way of talking and his use of archaic expressions (for instance, he would often say Kohsia or Your Excellency) reminded me of an actor in an old-style Chinese play. He struck me as exceptionally well-informed. During dinner last night our conversation reached a high international plane. We talked of democracy and communism and international law and the League of Nations and post-war planning.

We talked of food too. Whenever half a dozen Chinese meet they invariably talk of food. It is a treat to hear the Chinese talk of the delicacies in various parts of China. They talk of food with the same analytical zest as Vatsayana[1] talks of women. Last night the question was how often a man should eat. The English ate four times a day, said Gillett. The English could afford it, said our host, but not the Chinese. That was not the reason, said Gillett; Englishmen had smaller stomachs than Chinese and could not eat much at a time; therefore they had to eat more frequently. Our Chinese hosts enjoyed this repartee. One Mr Yang, Secretary of the Kuomintang Party in Yarkand and a fellow-traveller to Tihwa, remarked that in Sinkiang at any rate the officials could not afford the time to have more than two meals. They were so busy, he said, for they were determined to turn deserts into oases. Amen.

After dinner Mr Chao took us to an entertainment, prepared in our honour. I was amazed with the rapidity with which it was arranged. It was as if a button had been pressed; and a stage appeared, the actors were dressed and the audience assembled.

The performance was on the whole disappointing. There was little of that native flavour which gave so great a charm to Turki dances in Khotan and Keriya. Here the

[1] Author of *Kamasutra*, 'The Art of Love', an ancient classic.

dances we saw were Western or Westernized; legs came into play more than arms. The dresses were Western too and did not suit Turki girls. How much better the Turki girls looked in Khotan with their smart waistcoats, long boots and their jaunty caps! Here they wore frocks; but when they danced it was obvious that the person who presented them with frocks had forgotten to present them with stays! Kuchar is reputed for the beauty of its girls. They wear flowers in their hair and have themselves been compared to flowers. There is a familiar rhyme which runs as follows:

T'u-erh-fan-ti pu' -t'ao
Ha-mi-ti kua;
K'u-ch'e-ti Ku-niang
I-chih hua.

That is, 'Turfan for grapes, Hami for melons; and the girls of Kuchar are all like flowers'. But if Kuchar girls are put into Western frocks and made to throw their legs about, it will not be long before their reputation for beauty becomes a thing of the past.

There were, however, one or two indigenous dances which were very pretty. The male actor—the only male actor—had a glorious voice and a spontaneous sense of humour. Above all the music was charming. Kuchar, I was told, was the last town in which the music of the T'ang dynasty had survived. It had a kind of haunting rhythm, a wistful sweetness about it, as some of the South Indian tunes have. In the old days Kuchar musicians used to go to the fountains at the time of rainfall and translate the sound of falling waters into music.

We left Kuchar at about 9. Our drive of 70 miles to Bugur lay through a desert, interspersed with a couple of small oases and speckled with embryonic sand-dunes. It was also littered with the skeletons of donkeys.

At Bugur too we were the guests of the District Magistrate, Mr Teh Kung-Ts'un. It is impossible to imagine

a greater contrast than between him and Mr Chao of Kuchar. The latter belongs to the twentieth century; the former is a survival from the nineteenth. Slow, sedate and scholarly, he has a charm of his own. He has adjusted himself to the changing conditions of the present times with remarkable agility. At present he is engaged in introducing the Pao-Chia system on which constitutional government is to be based in China after the war. Moreover, he could put many a younger man, including myself, to shame by his capacity for drinking. He reminded me of Gibbon's description of eighteenth-century Oxford where 'the dull and deep potations of the Dons excused the brisk intemperance of youth'.

Another attractive trait about him was his fondness for animals. He loved to hear me talk about elephants. Nowhere was Combo[1] more petted than in Bugur. Mr Teh related the story of his own dog of which he used to be extremely fond. That dog, having met with a dreadful accident, ran to him for two miles, limping on two legs and wailing, and died in his hands. There were tears in his eyes when he said this.

It reminded me of an elephant which my father had. He had lent her for a temple festival. Another elephant gored her in the belly, and she ran to our house, with her entrails hanging out and screaming. It is one of my earliest memories. Even now, whenever I dream, I dream of elephants.

Korla, Friday, 10 *November*

Again, our road of a hundred miles from Bugur to Korla lay through a desert. But today's desert was different from yesterday's. It had sufficient moisture for the growth of tamarisks and wild poplars but not enough for cultivation. According to the Chinese the

[1] Gillett's dog.

wild poplar (*wu t'ung shu*) is the tree on which the legendary bird, the Phoenix, roosts. To the Chinese the tree itself, which does not grow in the interior of China and has such twisted and gnarled branches, must have seemed legendary.

On the road we saw a large number of arabas[1] carrying round-faced Kirghiz women, laughing and chattering as they do always, with their chubby little children. I was told they were the families of some regiment on transfer. In China there are no denominational regiments as we have in India. There are no separate Kirghiz, Tajik or Turki regiments like our Mahratta, Rajput and Sikh regiments.

We also saw a caravan of a thousand camels, tied nose to tail, tail to nose, carrying kham[2] to Urumchi for the use of the army. They are the finest camels I have seen, of the Bactrian type, beating the Baluchistan camels in strength, symmetry and superciliousness.

We reached Korla shortly after 5. But the sun had already set and it was quite dark, for the days are getting shorter. The willows are still changing colour but the poplars have lost their leaves. Last evening one poplar at the entrance to the Bugur yamen seemed to cling to its leaves; but this morning even that poplar was vigorously shedding its golden leaves like a woman who, in a fit of anger, flings away the ornaments with which her husband had decked her from head to foot.

According to the conventional Chinese reckoning winter has just set in. Instead of the usual seasons, spring, summer, autumn, and winter, the Chinese divide their year into twenty-four seasons of about two weeks each, mostly for the convenience of farmers. For instance, what we call winter is divided into six seasons, namely, 'Li Tung' or the establishment of winter; 'Tung Chih' or winter has arrived; 'Shao Hsueh' or small

1 Two-wheeled horse carriages.

2 A kind of coarse cloth.

snow; 'Ta Hsueh' or big snow; 'Shao Han' or small cold; and 'Ta Han' or big cold. We are now in the season of 'Li Tung' or the establishment of winter.

In Indian classics the year is divided into six seasons, namely, spring, summer, the rainy season, autumn, winter and the season of snow. There is a most beautiful description of these seasons in Kalidasa's *Ritusamhara*, The Cycle of Seasons. In describing the summer Kalidasa gives a vivid picture of the devastation caused by forest fires before which terrified herds of cattle run for their lives. He also describes the thirst and the lethargy produced by the summer heat in man and animal, in the elephant, the gazelle, the wild boar, the cobra and the frog. Kalidasa then proceeds to describe the rainy season. He speaks of wild tumultuous streams which, like wanton girls, grasp the tottering trees on their banks in their whirlwind rush to the sea. Autumn he portrays as a newwed bride, her beauteous face full of full-blown lotuses. Creepers he compares to the graceful arms of women; and the white jasmine, shining through the crimson blossoms of the Asoka tree, to the dazzling teeth and ruby lips of smiling girls. Winter he says is the season dear to lovers, whose raptures he paints in glowing colours. Nights in winter, however, do not appeal to lovers, because the moonbeams are cold and the light of the stars is pale. On the next season, spring, Kalidasa lavishes all the wealth of his imagery. His vernal woods are full of the hum of intoxicated bees and the scent of mango blossoms which he compares to the darts with which the God of Love inflames the hearts of 'sweet seventeen' to thoughts of love.

Such descriptions are unthinkable in Chinese poetry; for the theme of love is not a favourite one with Chinese authors and, when admitted, is treated with the utmost restraint. But in Indian poetry even poems of Nature are poems of love. The *Ritusamhara* is less a description

of the seasons than of the sentiments which the seasons evoke in the minds of lovers; and an English poet has called it, not 'The Cycle of Seasons', but 'The Calendar of Love'.

Karashahr, Saturday, 11 November

Korla, nestling among hills and full of orchards, struck me as a very pleasant spot. It is noted for its pears; and last night we satisfied ourselves that its reputation was not unjustified. The District Magistrate here was in love; he was due to marry a local Chinese schoolgirl in about a month. He was beautifully bashful when this was mentioned. Gillett, who speaks English with admirable precision and Chinese with appropriate circumlocution, congratulated him and said that he felt certain that all his children would rejoice in that event. By his children he meant the people of his District. I felt, however, that it was a risky thing to say, for the Magistrate had told us that he was a widower and he might have had children by his first wife.

Soon after leaving Korla we entered 'the Pass of the Iron Gate'. We had thought that its name was 'the Pass of Heavenly Gate' (T'ien men kuan) and not 'the Pass of the Iron Gate' (T'ieh men kuan). However, the latter name is more appropriate; for there is about this Pass a certain grimness as about the Khyber. Here too there were bare hills; a deep ravine like the Ali Masjid gorge; a watch-tower like a Khassadar's post on the Indian frontier; and a high wind like the one which once blew off the hood of my car in the Khyber Pass. And that reminds me of a brick which Anujee once dropped—the only brick which I have known her drop. One morning a friend of ours arrived unexpectedly at our house in Peshawar from Mysore. We had no intimation of her visit at all. Anujee, while casually talking

to her of happenings in Peshawar said, 'Day before yesterday the hood of our car was blown off in the Khyber; yesterday my husband had a tooth out; and today you came. Altogether it was a bad week for us'. We all, including our guest, roared with laughter.

One attractive feature about the Pass of the Iron Gate was its river—the only decent river I have seen in Sinkiang. It was so different from the listless, dissipated, goitre-giving, gonorrhœa-stinking rivers of Yarkand and Khotan. It seemed to have a volition and radiance of its own, like the life of a man who follows

that inner light
Which makes the path before him always bright

It had that ease and grace, that strength and gentleness and that unhurried urgency with which a man of ideals goes through life, smiling at and overcoming all the obstacles in his way.

Only one thing spoiled the beauty of this Pass—a long row of skeletons of donkeys. We saw a particularly gruesome sight—a living donkey, too weak to resist its assailants, being mauled and flayed by carrion crows There it lay, like 'the Sick Man of Europe' in the nineteenth century, unable to resist its assailants.

It took us seven hours to do the 36 miles from Korla to Karashahr. The road was execrable; and one of the innumerable bumps caused one of the rear wheels to roll off our car. It took us over an hour to fit it on again Hardly had we gone five miles when the wheel again showed separatist tendencies. Just at that time our escort lorry, with the General's wife on top of the luggage, hove in sight. We abandoned our car and got into her lorry and for the first time I saw her smile!

Before coming into Karashahr we crossed the Karashahr River by a newly built bridge. Swift, deep and some 500 yards in width, it flows from the T'ien Shan to the Bagrash Kol Lake. Until the bridge was constructed

the Karashahr River used to be the great bugbear for travellers between Kashgar and Urumchi. In summer, when the river was full, you could cross it by ferry; and in winter, when it was fully frozen, you could cross it by car. But when the ice was forming, as it is now, or melting, as in the spring, it was impossible to cross the Karashahr River. This new bridge which was constructed at a cost of 400,000 Sinkiang dollars is therefore a great boon to travellers. We almost felt as if the bridge was specially constructed for us; for it was only a week ago that it was completed.

Karashahr, Sunday, 12 November

The route by which we have been travelling is one of the great caravan routes in history. It is as historic as the Southern Route along which we went to Khotan and Keriya and which goes along the northern foot of the Kunlun Range through Lob Nor and Charkhlik to Tun Huang and thence to the interior of China. We are now on the great Northern Route which, starting from Ferghana and Samarkand, goes past Turfan and the northern oases of the Tarim basin to Urumchi and Hami. There is also another northern route which, starting from Siberia, goes through Kuldja, Chugchak and Tihwa and thence to Hami. And from Hami traffic goes by the Great Highway towards Kansu and China within the Wall.

We are coming to the end of Turkestan Proper—the land of Turkis, or, as the Chinese call them, Ch'an-t'ou or Turban Heads. In Karashahr itself the Turkis are in a minority. They are outnumbered by the Mongols and the Tungans.

What an amalgam of races there is in Sinkiang! Among 'the Fourteen Races' in Sinkiang are the Kirghiz, a nomadic tribe living in the Pamirs and Kunlun; the Tajiks, of Aryan stock, living in Sarikol; the Turkis, the

largest racial group, occupying the oases in southern Sinkiang and softened by their sluggish surroundings; the Tungans, who are hardly distinguishable from the Chinese, to the east of Karashahr; the Mongols, astride the T'ien Shan to the north of Karashahr; the Tartars, who are Mussulmans of Asiatic Russia; the Uzbegs from the Andijan region, who are allied to the Turkis and have a more forceful character; the Manchus, who are mostly relics of the officials in Manchu times; the Sibos and Solons who are allied to the Manchus; naturalized Russians who number about 13,000; and of course the Chinese themselves who embrace some of the above racial groups and rule them all. Gillett thinks that we ought to add a fifteenth race which outnumbers them all, the donkeys. Nowhere in the world have I seen so many donkeys, alive or dead, as in Sinkiang.

In Karashahr itself the three main races are the Mongols, Tungans, and Turkis. The Mongol migration into China in the eighteenth century forms one of the epic chapters in history. In the middle of the seventeenth century they migrated from western Mongolia into Russia. There the Czar subjected them to cruel taxation; and no longer able to bear it they decided to migrate *en masse* to China in the middle of the eighteenth century. The Russian authorities used every means in their power to prevent their return; and hundreds perished *en route*. The Emperor Ch'ien Lung received them kindly and gave them various concessions. They have generally remained loyal to the Chinese Government; and the attempts made in the last decade to embroil them in the general uprising against the Provincial Government were in vain. The Mongols, who are Lamaists to a man, were not keen on a Muslim hegemony in Sinkiang.

The Tungans, on the contrary, have often been a thorn in the side of the Chinese. The latest occasion on which they made a nuisance of themselves was in the first few

years of the last decade. The background of that rebellion was as follows: During the seventeen years following the Revolution of 1911 China was in a turmoil. Sinkiang, however, remained calm under General Yang Tseng-hsin, who jealously preserved its autonomy against Russian influence and Chinese control. In particular he fought General Feng Yu-hsiang who, with his Kuo Min Chun (National Peoples' Party) as opposed to the Kuomintang was in control of the north-west. General Yang died in 1928. During the time of his successor, General Chin Shu-jen, there was considerable friction between the Chinese and the natives as shown by the rising of the Turkis in Hami in 1931. The Tungans too began to be restive; and Ma Chung-ying, a Tungan General in Kansu, who had been fighting General Feng Yu-hsiang, turned his attention to Sinkiang. Not only the Tungans of Sinkiang, but the Kirghiz and the Turkis rallied to his banner; and their combined forces overthrew the Chinese administration in Kashgar. Before long, however, the Turkis and the Tungans fell out; and Ma Chung-ying drove out the Turkis who had been in control of Kashgar. In the meantime General Chin Shu-jen was ousted by General Sheng Shih-ts'ai; and the latter proceeded to crush the Tungans with Russian assistance. For the next few years General Sheng Shih-ts'ai governed Sinkiang with the assistance of Russian Advisers. In 1943, however, Russia withdrew from Sinkiang, lock, stock and barrel; and in August 1944 General Sheng Shih-ts'ai himself resigned the office of Tupan. At last, and for the first time since the Revolution of 1911, the field was clear for the Central Government to assert its authority over Sinkiang.

General Feng Yu-hsiang, who figured prominently in the tumults of the last decade, is one of the most arresting characters I have met. He is known as the Christian General. The story goes that he baptised a whole

regiment by a fire hose. The following is a copy of a letter which General Feng Yu-hsiang recently wrote to his fourteen-year-old son who was anxious to join the army and who was turned down as being under age:

Listen to me, my dear son. I have received your letter and I am really delighted, because I see that your desire is to render service to our country. You are a good son; go and tell the recruiting official 'Yes, I am young in age and small in size, but strong in body'. Tell him also that little Wong Chi was only twelve years old, much younger than you are, when he saved his country. Bravo, my son, you are a great hero and you have proved yourself worthy of your ancestors. Your elder brother has been fighting since the beginning of this war and your third sister is working in the army. Yes, my dear son, go and enlist yourself. Take up arms, go to the front and fight the enemy.

Qumush, Monday, 13 *November*

Yesterday we strolled into the Karashahr bazaar. It was a refreshing contrast to the bazaars in southern Sinkiang. At any rate the shops were open and not closed or deserted as in the Yarkand-Khotan area. Deprived of the stimulus of foreign trade, which made them flourishing centres on an international route in the greatest periods of Chinese history, the southern oases seemed to be suffering from what Owen Lattimore calls 'a kind of timeless and enchanted stagnation'. But Karashahr had some life. There were a number of Chinese shops selling such things as 'Mikado torches' made in Japan, Tiger Balm for headache and deer horns for restoring vitality. We also saw heaps of melons and grapes, a kind of vermicelli made from beans, and mushrooms for which Karashahr is famous. Last year 1 gin (1¼ lb.) of mushrooms cost 5 kochins; now it costs 500 kochins. Even Sinkiang is being caught up in the spiral of inflation.

At about midday I heard a sound like that of a siren. I was surprised that in a town like Karashahr there should be such a device for indicating time. I looked overhead and saw a number of pigeons flying about. I was told the sound emanated from them. It is the practice here to tie a small gourd, bored at both ends, on the feet of pigeons so that when they fly the air may whistle through the gourds and make a noise which keeps the hawks away.

In the bazaar I saw a Mongol with a pigtail. When I was a child all I knew about the Chinese was that the women had bound feet and the men had pigtails. The Revolution of 1911 has emancipated the feet of women; and pigtails have disappeared. In fact the wearing of pigtails was not originally a Chinese custom. Originally the Chinese, like the Nairs in Malabar, used to wear their hair in a coil on the top of the head. It was the Mongols who first ordered the Chinese to wear their hair in two pigtails, but in the purely Chinese dynasty of the Mings pigtails disappeared. The Manchus were determined to resurrect them and the people objected. All opposition was crushed by force. 'Your hair or your head' was the Manchu slogan. 'Our head but not our hair' retorted the Chinese. And no less than 97,000 heads in Chiating and 75,000 in the suburbs were severed from their necks for the refusal to wear pigtails. That settled the question, until the pigtails and the pigs who insisted on them were swept away by the Revolution of 1911.

We left Karashahr at 9.30 this morning and drove over the new motor road; but it was too badly cut up by watercourses and no attempt had been made to carry out repairs. We therefore had to abandon the motor road and took to the old cart road, though the latter was full of ruts. It took us 4½ hours to cover 47 miles to the oasis of Ushaktala.

By this time I was beginning to be tired of oases and deserts and dead donkeys. In the afternoon, however,

the scenery turned out to be pleasant. The T'ien Shan appeared not only to the left, as usual, but to our right, and the hills to the right were, to my joy, covered with fresh-fallen snow. We then entered a pass which the Turkis appropriately call, from the colours of the hills, 'Black and Red Pass' (Qara Qizil) and the Chinese call the Elm Valley Pass (Yu Shu Kuo). As we drove up, the Pass became more and more contracted and the hills came nearer and nearer. At the summit of the Pass, Mir Hamza went out and shot a couple of chikor. We then descended by a winding gorge into a vast and not unattractive valley; and as it had grown quite dark, we decided to spend the night in the little village, Qumush. Here, Major Han, the Police Officer, who had been deputed from Kashgar to look after us, made himself felt. He picked out the best mud hut in the village, which was worse than the worst in Travancore or Malabar, coaxed the women-folk out of the best room, lit a fire and spread out our beds. And there at 7.30 Gillett and I went to bed—I after a delicious dish of chikor and Gillett after a strong dose of bismuth.

Toqsun, Tuesday, 14 November

Qumush where we spent the last night was a tiny village with a single street and about a dozen houses. For a village of that size it looked remarkably prosperous. Its prosperity and indeed its existence turn on a spring. For thirty miles in the direction of Kashgar or Urumchi not a drop of water is to be had; and the result is shown by the skeletons of dead donkeys. We found them in shoals lying close together on the top of the Elm Valley Pass, as if they had been mown down by machine-guns. Qumush is an inevitable halting-place for caravans; and the people of Qumush are all inn-keepers. The Chinese inhabitants of the village had shown their gratitude to the

supernatural powers for giving them a spring by erecting a 'King Dragon Temple', the legend being that water spouted out of the mouth of the sacred dragon. The temple is still there, situated picturesquely on a hillock; but the King Dragon has disappeared from the temple even as the Chinese have from the villages. On the next hillock, however, there is a Muslim Mazar and I dare say the Mazar is as benign as the King Dragon used to be.

Yesterday we saw a couple of lonely Mongol homes between Karashahr and Qumush. They were not houses, not even mud huts, but pathetic imitations in mud of Mongol tents. The Mongols are a nomadic race who spend the summer in the foothills of the Heavenly Mountains and the winter on the shores of the Bagrash Kol Lake. The 'houses' which we saw, however, were built by a couple of Mongols who were making a furtive effort to settle down to cultivation. Such efforts are looked down upon by the rest of the tribe, who regard the nomadic way of life as better and higher than that of the stay-at-home cultivator. Certainly, the nomad has virtues of his own. He is hardier, more adventurous and generally more cheerful. And among the nomads, such as the Kirghiz, women have more freedom (and less licence) than, for instance, among the Turkis.

However, the process of history requires that nomadism must go. As time goes on the nomad finds himself more and more restricted in space. There was a time when nomadic tribes could range over the whole of Central Asia—and beyond—at their own sweet will. But now the nomads' lust for fresh woods and pastures new has to be restricted to seasonal migrations. And from this seasonal migration to the same spots, to a settlement in a local habitation is only a step, but a painful step which may take centuries to complete.

The nomad, however, is tenacious of the land that he still has. Yesterday we heard in Karashahr that a number

of armed Qazaqs proceeded to the house of a Chinese magistrate in the Ili District, dragged him out, blinded him and then murdered him. The Qazaqs are said to have been nourishing considerable resentment against the Sinkiang authorities for settling famine refugees from Honan on their lands.

We left Qumush soon after 9 and entered yet another Pass. We wound our way through a number of toy hillocks, red and black and grey, mostly rounded and some tapering. When we began to descend, however, the Pass became most impressive. Here were no toy hillocks, but giant hills piercing the bluest of blue skies and reminding us of the Karakoram gorges. And like the Karakorams, some of them were crumbling to pieces. Where they were crumbling, the road was blocked with rocks and boulders; and we had to hack our way through with crowbars and pickaxes. We then came to a lovely spring after which the Pass takes its name—Arghai Bulaq or 'Pass of the Stallion Spring'. Then we motored, not along, but right over a frozen river bed; and after a descent of some 3,000 feet from the summit of the Pass we reached the town of Toqsun.

Turfan, Wednesday, 15 November

Exactly two months ago I was on the Roof of the World. And today I am below sea level. On the 15th of September I crossed the Mintaka Pass, 15,450 feet high, and spent the night in Lupgaz, 14,500 feet above sea level. And now I am in the Turfan Depression which in places goes a thousand feet below the level of the sea.

This morning we left Toqsun at about 10. Against us were the Fire Mountains (Ho Shan) and beyond them, striking the blue horizon, the white peaks of Bogdo Ola, the sacred mountain of the Mongols. About five miles from Toqsun we left the main Urumchi road and turned

eastwards towards Turfan, the centre of the Depression. We drove over a vast gravel plain which was marked by rows of wells, running parallel to one another. I recognized them at once; they were my old Baluchistan friends, the karezes. How many karezes have I inspected in the Zhob and how much takkavi[1] have I given for their construction! The karez is a kind of underground channel, connected by a number of wells often 50 or 60 feet deep. I was much interested to hear that the karez was first introduced into Turfan by Lin Tze-hsu (1785-1850), the famous Imperial Commissioner and Viceroy of Hupeh and Hunan, who seized and destroyed some 10 million dollars' worth of foreign-owned opium and brought on war with Great Britain. Giles, of the China Consular Service and late professor of Chinese in the university of Cambridge, has included Lin's letter to Queen Victoria on the opium evil in his *Gems of Chinese Literature* and has described him as 'a fine scholar, a just and merciful official and a true patriot'. For his part in the 'Opium War' he was recalled and disgraced and subsequently banished to Sinkiang. Here too he found scope for his ability and initiative. He had heard of karezes which were in use in Persia and proceeded to introduce them here. They have been a godsend; and the wealth of a man in Turfan and Toqsun is often reckoned in the number of karezes he owns.

Some thirty miles from Toqsun we rejoined the direct route to Urumchi; and we came into Turfan through a gap in the hills. While approaching Turfan we saw, for the first time in Sinkiang, notices such as 'Go Slow', 'Cross-road', etc., in three languages, Chinese, Turki and, significantly enough, Russian. We passed through the Chinese city where the yamen was situated. We saw the Six-Pointed Star being erased from the walls of certain buildings. On a tablet we saw the original Chinese

1 Government loan to cultivators for agricultural purposes.

Revolutionary Flag with its five colours, red, blue, yellow, white and black, symbolizing the five races of China—the Hans, Manchus, Mongols, Muslims and Tibetans.

Turfan is famous for its melons and grapes, both of which we sampled. The melons are kept in cellars from last summer's crop and are preserved by being cut into strips and dried in the sun. The grapes in the valley of Toyuk near the Fire Mountains used to be so famous that formerly they were reserved for the use of the Royal Family and dispatched to Peking. Not far from Turfan is the P'u-t'ao Kou or Grape Valley, a beauty spot and a picnic resort. There are grape-drying houses in Turfan in which raisins are made from the former royal grapes. The grapes are merely hung up in barn-like buildings on the tops of houses with open mud brick walls; and in due course they become raisins.

Here we visited an eighteenth-century minaret, made of mud and overlaid with bricks arranged in various geometrical patterns—a kind of parody of Qutub Minar. Attached to it is a mosque where thousands of Muslims gather for Id or, as the Chinese call it, 'the Sheep-killing Festival' (Tsai Yang Cheh). I was told that it was built by one of the servants of the Emperor Ch'ien Lung in gratitude for the many favours he had received at the hands of his master. The story runs that he was a Turki who escorted 'the Fragrant Concubine' (Hsiang Fei) from Kashgar to Peking to her Imperial husband, who was so intoxicated by her fragrance that he built a mosque for her.

Our host did not know of any other sites of historical interest. Yet civilizations once flourished in the Turfan Depression and have left traces. In the early years of the Christian era Turfan was densely populated and had a high civilization. But in the succeeding centuries there was drought and rivers ceased to flow. The Turfan River issues, not, like the Aqsu River, from the perpetual snows

of the Heavenly Mountains but from the Bagrash Kol Lake. When it dried up the population dwindled and Turfan was deserted. But in the eighth and ninth centuries there was a remarkable renaissance to which many a civilization, near and distant, contributed its quota. The main impetus came from Buddhism. In Toyuk in the Turfan Depression Sir Aurel Stein saw numerous small caves which reminded him of 'the Cave of the Thousand Buddhas'. The German archaeologists discovered fragments of Manichaean and Nestorian texts in early Turki and Sogdian. From all corners people flocked to Turfan. 'Buddhists speaking Nagari and two dialects of Brahmi', says Lord Huntingdon in his *Pulse of Asia*, 'came from India in the South-west, Tibetans brought their language from the South-east; Chinese from the East; Uighurs and Turks from the North-east, North and North-west; while from the West came people who were probably Nestorian Christians and brought the Syriac and Manichaean tongues and an unknown language allied to Syriac.' Thus the followers of Christ and Mani peacefully followed their religions amongst a predominantly Buddhist population. By A.D. 1000, says Owen Lattimore, 'Islam came and the past was blotted out'.

Urumchi, Thursday, 16 *November*

Today's 100-mile drive from Turfan to Urumchi, involving an ascent of 3,000 feet from submarine level, was the most delightful of all my journeys in Sinkiang. The road was perfect. There were no washouts, no diversions, no nerve-racking bumps. Nor was there any of that dust in which we used to be smothered day after day and which, at the end of every drive, used to turn my greying hair completely grey and Gillett's reddish-brown beard brownish white. On the contrary, the road had such luxuries, rare in Sinkiang, as mileposts and road-signs.

The weather was perfect. The sun shone brilliantly in the blue sky—as it does in China's national flag. There was little of that impenetrable dust haze in which Sinkiang is enveloped on nine days out of ten. I revelled in the sunshine, not merely because of its rarity here but because for five or six months I shall not see it at all in Chungking with its mists and fogs. 'In Szechwan', runs a proverb, 'dogs bark at the sun'—so rare is its appearance.

The scenery was perfect too. For the first 40 miles we rose gradually and almost imperceptibly to the top of the Pass. Then we descended into a gorge, not so terrific as the Toqsun gorges, but far more attractive. To our left was a sparkling river with groves of willows on its banks. The willows had shed their leaves but had assumed an incredibly lovely purple colour, contrasting with and almost mocking the beauty of the blue skies. And as if to mock both the blue skies and the purple willows, rose to our right the white peaks of Bogdo Ola, 'the Spirit Mountain'.

At about midday we reached Daban Chang—'the town of the Pass'—and had lunch in a newly built police station. On the walls of the police station there was a calendar with pictures of Chinese Generals. What a galaxy of Generals they have in China! I was glad to see the pictures of some of the Generals I have had the privilege of meeting in Chungking—the Generalissimo himself; General Hó Ying-chin, the War Minister; General Pai Chung-hsi, a Moslem and a reputed tactician; General Chang Chun, the Governor of Szechwan; General Feng Yu-hsiang, the Christian General; and General Wu Teh-chen, the energetic Secretary-General of the Kuomintang Party. The Police Officer in charge of the Daban Chang police station advised us to drive as fast as we could to Urumchi and not to stop on any account—not even for shooting chikor—as there was a suspicion of Qazaq bandits on the road. Here too we heard of Qazaq

restiveness. They have been laying mines on the road near the Sinkiang-Kansu border and blowing up lorries proceeding on the great highway to the interior of China. There is also a rumour that a number of armed Qazaqs from or beyond the Sino-Russian border made a determined attack on Ili.

After Daban Chang the scene was one of incredible loveliness. The country opened out, as it does after the Mintaka Pass into the Roof of the World. The hills on both sides resembled, in their rounded beauty, the Pamirs. Corresponding to the Tashkurghan River there was the Urumchi River, blue and white, for it was half frozen. And there appeared a couple of beautiful blue sapphire lakes.

There also appeared patches of snow, not only on the hills but also on the ground, clinging to the tamarisk bushes. As we proceeded further, the patches became bigger and deeper. Snow encroached on the road, embalming the skeletons of abandoned donkeys. Towards the end of our journey the whole land was enveloped in snow; and we sailed, as it were, into Urumchi through a sea of snow with waves of hills rising in the air.

Thus I have completed a motor trip of a thousand miles through deserts and oases between Kashgar and Urumchi, following a similar journey of about 800 miles to Keriya and back.

I find a journey by car always exciting. It has, of course, its disadvantages. One can know and love the country better by travelling on foot or on horseback. No one who has a feeling for Nature will contemplate with equanimity the prospect of an Indo-Sinkiang road. I dread the thought that some day men may 'do' in three or four days the magnificent country which it took me forty-six days to march through. To enable every Tom, Dick and Harry to picnic at the foot of Nanga Parbat or Mount Rakhaposhi, or cross the Mintaka or the

Chichkillik Pass in his jeep, or flit past the Batura or Sassaini glaciers, will be a sacrilege. But Nature will not permit it. Armed with snow and blizzards, avalanches and landslides, she will jealously guard these regions as her last preserve against the intrusion of man.

Riding or walking one also gets to know the people better. With the advent of the car they say that district officers in India know the people of their districts, their sorrows and afflictions, less than before. On my return to India from Oxford to take up my duties as a member of the I.C.S., one of the first officers I met was Couchman, Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras. 'If I had my way,' he said, 'I would prohibit every I.C.S. officer with less than ten years' service to have a car or a wife.' Within six months I had both. Both were doubtless distracting; but I have never regretted either.

I shall always regard this desert trip as amongst the most memorable car journeys I have done. And I have done some memorable ones. One of the most pleasant was a tour from Tirupattur, where I was sub-Collector, across the Bangalore plateau to Shimoga and the great Gersoppa Falls, which are higher than Niagara and have a larger volume of water than the falls in the Alps; thence over the lofty Western Ghats to the palm-girt seacoast of Mangalore; then up again to Mercara, the capital of Coorg, and down, through gardens of pepper and coffee and cardamom, to Mysore, that beautiful city which is a perfect blend of medieval romance and modern town-planning. Very different was our journey from Delhi to Fort Sandeman. After crossing the five rivers, from which the Punjab takes its name, we passed the metropolis of Lahore and the furnace of Multan and Dera Ismail Khan, crossed by a bridge of boats the Indus, from which India herself takes her name, rose by a zigzag road to Fort Munro and then motored through Loralai and the Zhob, where every now and then the mail lorry

used to get shot at by some disgruntled tribesman, to 'the Castle' at Fort Sandeman where I stayed for two of the most delightful years of my service. Some of my most interesting tours were in Ceylon. Nothing could beat in beauty and variety a trip from Colombo over the Kadugannawa Pass to Kandy, with its beautiful but haunted lake and the Temple of the Tooth; then, through Katugastota, where you see elephants bathing, through tea and rubber estates to the Caves of Dambula and the Ajanta-like frescoes of Sigiriya; to Polonnaruwa with its ruined palaces and lotus baths and the statue of Buddha in Nirvana with his favourite disciple, Ananda, weeping by his side; on to Trincomalee, superior to Colombo as a natural harbour, to the sacred city of Anuradhapura, with its stupas and statues and dagobas; and back to Kandy along a lovely forest road. In a very different setting was our holiday trip in 1934 when we motored from the medieval town of Roquebrune between Menton and Monte Carlo over the delightful vine country of southern France to historic Nîmes and Carcassone; and then past the Pyrenees along the Spanish Riviera to Barcelona, where we met Panikker, a Malayalee who had married a Spanish girl and built up quite a considerable business; and to Madrid, with its palaces, marble mausoleums and picture galleries. More unusual and even more interesting was my official tour from Mombasa, on the African Coast, to Nairobi, the capital of Kenya; along the Kenya Highlands, reserved for Europeans, and the Rift Valley, with its extinct volcanoes and sulphurous lakes, to Eldoret, the highest railway station in the British Empire; through the garden of Uganda to its capital, Entebbe, and round Lake Victoria, where we could see crocodiles basking in the sun, hippopotamus emerging out of the lake in the dead of night, and the Nile issuing with might and fury out of the Victoria Falls; and finally along the Serengeti plain with its profusion of wild life, to Dar es-Salaam, the capital of

former German East Africa. The trip through the deserts and oases of Central Asia, which I have just completed, is no whit inferior in interest to any of the above journeys; and, taken in conjunction with my trek from Bandipur to Ighiz Yar, it beats them all.

CHAPTER VIII

'RETURN TO CIVILIZATION'

Urumchi, Friday, 17 *November*

TIHWA, the Chinese name of Urumchi, the capital of Sinkiang, means 'Return to civilization'. Urumchi is its Mongolian name though colloquially Mongol caravan men call it 'Hung Miaotzu', or 'Red Temple', from a Red Temple Pagoda in Urumchi. When the great Emperor Ch'ien Lung broke the Mongol Federation in the middle of the eighteenth century and established Chinese rule in this region he christened it Sinkiang or 'the New Dominion' and its capital Tihwa or 'Return to Civilization'.

A visitor to Urumchi from the deserts of southern Sinkiang does indeed feel that he is returning to civilization. Here you have motor cars and aeroplanes, electric light, a telephone system, a newspaper, a correspondent of the Central News Agency (who insisted on interviewing me) and wireless communication with the outer world. With wireless, one does not feel isolated in Urumchi; one feels that even New Delhi is just next door. In fact, Gillett has just finished decoding a telegram from Caroe from which it is clear that the Government of India are concerned over the extensive confiscation of the lands of Indians under General Sheng Shih-ts'ai's regime in Sinkiang.

In Urumchi one comes across not only the amenities of civilization but also men on whom different civilizations have left their impress. The Governor, Mr Wu Chung-hsin, is a distinguished Confucian scholar. The Special Delegate for Foreign Affairs, Mr Chaucer Wu, is a product of the London School of Economics. Mr Tseng

Shao-lu, the Secretary-General of the Provincial Government, who met us outside the city, was introduced to us as well versed in Chinese poetry and calligraphy. In China the art of calligraphy enjoys greater prestige than in any other country. Chinese letters have beauty and character; and a piece of Chinese writing by an expert like Mr Yü Yu-jen, President of the Control Yuan, is treasured, exhibited like a precious picture, and handed down as an heirloom.

I was interested to meet an Oxford man—the first since leaving Srinagar—in Urumchi. Turral, the British Consul, was at New College and put on a New College tie in honour, he said, of his Oxford senior, myself. He has indeed the versatility of an Oxford man. He read history at New College, but is more interested in music, architecture and philosophy. He is a Chinese scholar, knows Russian and Mongol, and has toyed with Arabic and Hindustani. He told us gratuitously that he got a third Class at Oxford. I told him of a definition by the art critic, Clutton-Brock, himself a New College man, of the four Classes into which successful students are divided at Oxford. 'The First', he said, 'is excessive ostentation; the Second is pretentious mediocrity; and the Fourth is obvious failure. The Third is the golden mean; and I myself got it.'

Gillett and I dined with Turral. Birds of the same Consular feather, they talked together—and left me out. For this I was thankful, for it is not always that one feels like talking or listening—least of all after a journey of a thousand miles.

Urumchi, Saturday, 18 *November*

It is doubtful if these Central Asian towns *ever* change. Their dull mud walls, mud houses, and mosques look as if they would remain the same for ever. In most

climates they would be washed away; but in Central Asia there is hardly any rain and so they stay on for ages.

'As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be' would be a particularly appropriate motto to place over the gateway of a Central Asian town.

So wrote Sir Francis Younghusband. These words are absolutely true of the towns in southern Sinkiang. They are as true today as they were when Sir Francis Younghusband visited Turkestan fifty years ago and Marco Polo seven hundred years ago. But they are not true of Urumchi. For Urumchi is changing under our very eyes. Its mud walls and mud houses are being pulled down; its streets are being widened; Parks and Squares are being laid out; and multi-storied brick buildings are rising. Shaking the dust of ages off her feet, Urumchi, like a woman who is determined to discard purdah, is springing brazenly into modernity.

In another respect, too, Urumchi is unlike any town in southern Sinkiang. It is essentially a Chinese town. In Kashgar or Yarkand, Khotan or Keriya it is rare to see a Chinese face in the bazaar. The few Chinese in those places huddle themselves together in the 'New City' of Kashgar or Yarkand. In Urumchi too there used to be three cities—a mud-walled Chinese city, in which the yamens and Chinese shops were located; a walled Moslem city, with its Turki and Tartar bazaars; and a Russian quarter, occupied mostly by impoverished émigrés from Russia, some of them doing menial work. (In our own house Russian girls sweep the floor.) But these distinctions are now being effaced. There are indeed other classes than 'the Sons of Han'; but whether they belong to the same race as the Chinese or not they are being assimilated into the same nation. An inscription in front of a mosque in Urumchi struck me as significant. It is not executed in sacred Arabic characters, but in profane Chinese; and

the calligrapher is not a Muslim divine but a Buddhist scholar, the keenest Buddhist scholar in China, who headed a Buddhist Mission to India three or four years ago and is now President of the Examination Yuan, Dr Tai Chi-t'ao. The inscription reads:

T'ien teh hao seng

which means

Heavenly virtue embraces all living creatures.

We are coming to the end of Turki-stan. We are also coming to the end of donkey-stan. When one thinks of the treatment to which the Sinkiang donkey is subjected by the Turkis one wonders whether Heaven did not exclude the donkey from the motto 'T'ien teh hao seng'. But in Urumchi there are few donkeys. There are more horses and camels. We are now among a harder, hardier folk.

The Qazaq is a born horseman. So is the female of his species. They even conduct their bargaining with shopkeepers from horseback. Broad-shouldered, wearing quilted or fur garments and a high pointed cap with a circular flap over the ears and shoulders, the Qazaq is a picturesque figure in the streets of Urumchi. So is the Qazaq woman with her black quilted coat and white cotton dress. Even more picturesque were the Mongols whom we saw in the bazaars; they were wearing a flowing dress of many bright colours like the gown of a Doctor of Music at Oxford. The migration of Mongols from Russia, where they could not brook the oppression of Czarist officials, to China in 1770 has been compared to the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. 'The migration of a people', writes Carruthers in his *Unknown Mongolia*, 'including men, women, children, flocks and herds; the transport of all household belongings; the actual journey undertaken—as it was—in midwinter, over bleak and barren steppes, for a distance of three thousand miles from the Volga to Dzungaria, form adequate material for a romance.

Harassed by enemies, decimated by disease, starving, fighting for their lives and their belongings, unable to retreat, forced to advance or to die, the Torguts marched by slow and painful stages back to their own land. After running the gauntlet of Russian Cossacks and Kirghiz plunderers for eight months, the remnant arrived on the confines of China and were given lands in the Kobuk District of Northern Dzungaria, the Yulduz plateau and the Kunyuz and Tekes Valleys in T'ien Shan.'

One sees Tungans too in Urumchi. They are a match for the Chinese in their fighting qualities and are indeed more Chinese-looking than any of the other tribes in Sinkiang. They are a match for the Chinese in business matters too; and this is expressed in the old Chinese saying that 'one Jew can cheat ten Christians; one Chinese is the equal of ten Jews; but one Tungan can get the better of ten Chinese'!

The Tungans are Chinese in all essentials but religion. And in China religion is not as essential as it is in India. When I was Under-Secretary and District Magistrate in Hyderabad (Deccan) the Residency office put up to me a draft, permitting a procession through the British administered areas, on condition that 'no seditious songs should be sung, except hymns to God'. I nearly passed the draft, a Chinese, with a sense of humour, would have passed it!

Thus, Chinese as Urumchi is, it is at the same time a picturesque racial medley. The Turkis, Mongols, Tungans and Tartars have each their own Cultural Association, housed in pretentiously modern buildings. In appearance at any rate there is little to distinguish one Cultural Association from another. Nor, I feel, is there much in substance. During the last decade all were levelled down by the Six Great Principles of Government; and now all are being levelled up by the Three People's Principles.

Urumchi, Sunday, 19 November

The last two days were taken up with official calls and return calls. The first personage we called on was General Chu Shao-liang, the famous Commander of the 8th War Zone with a fine military record during and after the Revolution of 1911. We were much impressed by him. He has a bright and—for a Chinese—extremely mobile face; and it is a joy to watch him break out, as he often does, into a hearty laugh. He has a vigour and directness of mind which express themselves in every gesture he makes. Even our very capable interpreter, however, was sometimes unable to follow his talk, for he comes from Fukien which has a dialect of its own.

China has almost as many dialects as we have languages in India. Fortunately they have only one language; and for this the credit goes to Emperor Ch'in Shih Huang-ti, known to the world as the builder of the Great Wall. He lived in the third century B.C. I always think that Chinese scholars have done him less than justice. He earned their eternal execration by ordering the great burning of the books, including Confucian classics, lest they should breed dangerous thoughts against his regime. For this reason scholars regard him as a devil incarnate; but even the devil must have his due. Ch'in Shih Huang-ti was the first Emperor to form the conception of a unified China. He would not tolerate anything that stood in the way. Feudalism seemed to be an obstacle; so, away with feudalism! Scholarship seemed to stand in the way; so, away with scholarship! The different scripts, then prevalent, were a bar to unity; so, away with those! Thus, at the cost of much blood and toil, tears and sweat, he pursued his sublime conception of a unified Chinese State, having a single language and a single ruler.

When General Chu Shao-liang received us he was wearing a long and flowery Chinese gown; and when he returned our call, he had his military uniform on. In the

former he looked like a Buddhist monk; and in the latter he looked every inch a soldier. Perhaps he has something of both in him, as most Chinese have. In their youth and middle age, all Chinese are Confucian, immersed in the affairs of the world which Confucius did not scoff at but rather attempted to regulate; but in their old age they turn to Taoism or Buddhism. General Chu Shao-liang, however, has shown no unworldly tendencies so far. He used to be a hard drinker, but the doctors have advised him to abstain from drink. Even so, Turral told me with admiration, he does drink on special occasions knowing full well that he may be drinking himself to death. And so, in Turral's eyes, he is 'a perfect sportsman'.

After General Chu Shao-liang we called on Mr Wu Chung-shin. He is the first nominee of the Central Government after the Revolution to be the head of this Province. The Qazaqs in the north have presented him with a first-class politico-military problem; it is said that six out of eight hsiens in the Ili District are controlled by them. Mr Wu spoke to us about his aims and objects in this Province—the preservation of peace, maintenance of equality among the various clans, the promotion of education and the development of trade. He expressed the hope that there would be more comings and goings between India and Sinkiang and that the trade of both countries would thus benefit.

Mr Wu turned from mundane affairs to religion and philosophy. There he was in his element. He spoke of the catholicity and toleration of China in religious matters and the shelter which China had given to other religions such as Buddhism and Christianity. If Westerners had come to China, armed with the sword only and without the Bible, the closed door of China, said Mr Wu, would never have been opened—a proposition which Gillett and I doubted but did not contradict. Mr Wu compared Chinese civilization to a mansion which had a

number of stories. The ground floor was Confucian; the second floor contained various apartments, occupied by the schools of Mencius, Hanfei and Meitze; the third story was occupied by Taoism; and the fourth, the highest story, was occupied by Buddhism. He felt that there could be no better guide for the conduct of worldly affairs than Confucius; and for the establishment of one's relations with the universe there could be no better guide than Gautama Buddha. In this way the Chinese had struck a happy medium between secular and spiritual matters.

From this exalted conversation we proceeded to have a chat with Mr Chaucer H. Wu, Special Delegate for Foreign Affairs in Sinkiang. His name is appropriate; he is thoroughly English in his manners. He remembers with pleasure the three years he spent in London as a student of the London School of Economics. He was the first official we met in Sinkiang who could speak English fluently. Handsome and vivacious, he has eyebrows which reminded me of Sir C. P.[1]—a perfect subject for Shankar's[2] merciless pencil. What Mr Wu said I have forgotten; all I remember is that it was a pleasant interview. And the talking and forgetting were facilitated by a bottle of champagne which he produced.

I also called on the Russian Consul. The Russian Consulate here looks like an Embassy rather than a Consulate, and indeed the last Consul-General had the rank of Minister. The Consulate is housed in a magnificent building, constructed in Czarist times, in a spacious park, and there are a number of little villas for the staff. By its side the British and American Consulates look like outhouses. Judged by the Russian Consulate here and the Russian Embassy in Chungking, Russian diplomats believe in keeping up appearances. They have a

[1] Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, Dewan of Travancore.

[2] Cartoonist of the *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi.

large staff too, and the staff is all Russian, down to chauffeurs, gate-keepers and domestic servants. British diplomats, on the other hand, employ the people of the country in which the Embassy or the Consulate is situated for all appointments which can be entrusted to them. Another peculiarity of the Russians is that they are accompanied by their womenfolk, but the women keep largely to themselves, as if to belie the old libel about communized wives in Soviet Russia. The Russian Embassy in Chungking and the Consulates in Sinkiang teem with children too; and in both Chungking and Urumchi there are Russian schools for the children of their employees.

On the whole, Russian diplomats, while personally simple, unaffected and workmanlike, live as aristocratically as the aristocratic English and spend as much money as the moneyed Americans. And this is an example which India may do well to emulate in the not distant future when she will have a diplomatic service of her own. We, in India, believe almost ostentatiously in plain living and high thinking; but when we represent our country abroad, it will do us no harm to indulge in a bit of plain thinking and high living.

Urumchi, Monday, 20 November

Yesterday I visited the local Military Academy. By a curious coincidence it was the anniversary of my visit to the Central Military Academy in Chengtu, the worthy successor of the Whampoa Academy which played a great part in the Chinese Revolution and in which Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek first made his mark as a born leader of men. I remember the practical joke which General Wen, who showed us round on that occasion, played on us. He asked us whether we had ever experienced tear gas. We said, no; all we knew was that tear gas had been used, with not much effect, on riotous mobs in India.

General Wen said with a sly smile: wait and see. When we passed 'the Gas Room' he asked us whether we would like to step in for a few seconds. Anujee, Kunja and I agreed, not knowing what was in store for us. We walked through and out of the gas room in fifteen seconds; but for the next fifteen minutes we coughed and sneezed and blew our noses and shed tears which we thought were never going to stop. So copious were Anujee's tears that her dainty handkerchief could not stem the flow, and she had to use the corner of her sari. The General himself did not escape the effects, but his tears were mixed with laughter.

The Military Academy which I visited today was originally founded by Chin Shu-jen, the self-appointed ruler of Sinkiang between the death of General Yang Tseng-hsin in 1928 and the advent of General Sheng Shih-ts'ai in 1933. In the time of General Sheng Shih-ts'ai it was further developed with Russian assistance. A few months ago, however, it was affiliated to the Central Military Academy in Chengtu. It is no longer known as 'the Sinkiang Military Academy' but 'Branch No. 9 of the Central Military Academy'.

This Academy, we were told, had about 800 cadets. The majority were Chinese. There were, however, a few Turkis, Qazaqs, Mongols and Kirghiz. We were shown round the class rooms, club, gymnasium and dormitories. Everything looked spick and span—so much so that I was reminded of Lord Curzon's visit to the Nagpur Hospital. The Viceroy went round the hospital and found that every bed was occupied. The patients looked almost unnaturally comfortable. Suddenly a thought struck him; and he asked one of the patients how much they had paid him to come to the hospital for the day. 'One rupee', the man replied. 'The words I used on that occasion', writes Lord Curzon, 'do not bear repetition.'

I hasten to add that this story has no relevance to the institution I visited.

We called on the newly arrived American Consul, Mr Robert Ward. He told us a story attached to his name. He used to be Spencer Ward; but when he stood for the Presidency of his School Society, his supporters told him that he had no chance of being elected if he stuck to his name, Spencer, and therefore they christened him Bob. They were right; and good old Bob was duly elected President. He is related to the famous Townsend Ward who was engaged by the Manchu Emperor to quell the T'aip'ing Rebellion. Bob's own interest in China began at the age of 19 when he wanted to write a biography of his distinguished relative. But in studying the material relating to the T'aip'ing Rebellion, a strange thing occurred. He fell in love with the T'aip'ings and gave up the idea of writing the biography of Townsend Ward.

I am not surprised that he fell in love with the T'aip'ings, for with all its extravagances the movement had many attractive features. It was founded in the middle of the nineteenth century by one Hung Hsiu-ch'üan who adopted the Christian doctrine and felt that he was inspired by God. Originally a purely religious body, called 'the Society of God-worshippers', it soon became a revolutionary political body, determined to overthrow the corrupt Manchu regime and establish in its place a 'Heavenly Dynasty', founded on the teachings of the Bible. Yet in doing so Hung Hsiu-ch'üan incurred the disfavour of Christians themselves and particularly Christian missionaries. The head and front of his offence was his claim to direct inspiration. If, says Fitzgerald, in his admirable history of China, he had humbly sought baptism and instruction, from some Reverend Smith, Christian missionaries would have approved of him. But direct inspiration granted to a Chinese was unthinkable. Moreover, he had the temerity to call himself 'the Younger

brother of Jesus', though no one objected to the Emperor calling himself 'the Son of Heaven'. The T'aip'ings swept the Yangtze valley, captured Nanking and were on the point of entering Tientsin when they were brought to a halt, and eventually overthrown, with foreign aid. During their brief period of power they effected many salutary reforms. Opium-smoking was forbidden; drink was prohibited; taxation was lightened and equitably adjusted; the equality of women was proclaimed; and women's feet were unbound. But this truly national, if extravagantly religious, movement was crushed; and the decadent Manchu yoke was continued over the Chinese people for another half a century.

Urumchi, Tuesday, 21 November

Here we are staying in a house called 'Nan Hua Yuan' or the South Garden. Until a few weeks ago it used to be occupied by the father of General Sheng Shih-ts'ai, the late Tupan, and his brother, Major General Sheng Shih-chi. And it was in this house that another brother of the late Tupan met his death under mysterious circumstances. With the departure of the late Tupan, all his relations have left, or are leaving the Province.

General Sheng Shih-ts'ai has been appointed Minister of Agriculture in Chungking—a face-saving device, so characteristic of the Chinese. I wonder what has happened to the former Minister, Admiral Shen Hung-lieh. He won the D.S.O. in the Battle of Jutland. I came into contact with him in connexion with the visit of certain Chinese agriculturists to India and Indian agriculturists to China. Here is a field in which the two neighbouring countries can help each other. The science of agriculture including research in mycology and entomology, is far more advanced in India than in China; but in the art of agriculture the Chinese are unbeatable. About this time

last year Anujee, Kunja and I travelled by road from Chungking to Chengtu, the capital of Szechwan. We found every inch of ground cultivated. Even the bunds separating one rice field from another were sown with beans. Whole hillsides had been symmetrically terraced and converted into fields, a single tree being left picturesquely on the top of the hills as a concession to nature. Not a drop of water was wasted; and each plant seemed to receive individual manuring. And the good earth in China rewards the immemorial patience and unflagging attention of the Chinese cultivator by yielding nearly twice as much rice and wheat per acre as in India.

I attended a banquet given jointly by General Chu Shao-liang, Supreme Commander of the 8th War Zone and the Governor, Mr Wu Chung-hsin. What a charming personality General Chu Shao-liang is, so strong and so gracious! Despite the doctor's directions, he drank hard. The wine served at the table was Bai ga'rh, a kind of liquor brewed locally from millet. The wine was strong (hsiung); and it was decided, with a pun on the word 'hsiung', that the man who drank an adequate quantity was to be judged a 'ying hsiung' or hero. I retired early from this game; and when someone drew General Chu's attention to this ignominious withdrawal, he was good enough to remark that I had no need to drink wine to be a hero as I had just performed a heroic journey and had already earned the title of 'ying hsiung'!

There were about a hundred guests at the banquet. Besides Gillett, Turral and myself, the Soviet Consul and the newly arrived American Consul and Soviet Vice-Consul were present. The Governor proposed the toast in choice words. Referring to me he said that in coming to China I had literally followed the footsteps of the great Chinese pilgrim, Hsuan Tsang. India was thus returning China the compliment which China paid to India 1,300 years ago; and the Governor hoped that my mission would

be followed by equally beneficent results. I replied; and Gillett followed with a speech in Chinese which was appreciated—all the more for its incoherence, for he was already becoming a 'ying hsiung'. Then Bob Ward, the American Consul, rose to make a speech. High-minded and with a ponderous sense of humour he began by asking for an assurance that his speech would not be published in the papers. We all drew up our chairs hoping he would let out some savoury diplomatic secret. Would his audience give the required assurance, asked Ward. There was no answer. Would they or would they not give an answer, he repeated with a Mark Antony touch. 'O.K.' said the genial Lo Chi, Commander of the Chinese Air Force in the North-western Provinces. Mr Ward then proceeded to disclose the important fact that he was born in Canada though he was an American by the accident of parentage. He belonged to 'that no-man's-land subject to cross-fire from both sides'—an expression which left that excellent Chinese interpreter, Mr Shuei, bewildered. He started writing a novel in his school days, but it was never published. When he came to China he felt that he was in a country which he already knew and among a people whom he already loved. And he concluded by making a plea for international brotherhood. He was followed by two Soviet speakers who, in striking contrast to the American, thanked the hosts in a couple of sentences, simply, briefly and almost brusquely.

Thus spoke men from different parts of the world—Chinese, British, American, Russian and Indian. It was a study in national temperaments.

Urumchi, Wednesday, 22 November

Gillett spent the morning meeting the Heads of the various Departments. He was much impressed by them. They all seemed determined—to use the expression of the

Kuomintang Party Secretary in Yarkand—'to turn deserts into oases'. A Herculean undertaking as the oases of Sinkiang at present form only 1½ per cent of the total area! Incidentally, they have here a lovely Chinese name for oasis—'lu chow' or green island. Anyone who, after travelling for miles in that sea of sand, the Taklamakan Desert, gets into an oasis will appreciate the appropriateness of this name.

Today I had a quiet talk with the American Consul. He has just come from Chungking. Since I left Chungking in the middle of June, I have been out of touch with developments in the capital. I was therefore glad to have some news from Mr Ward. I was specially interested to hear of the reactions of the Foreign Press Correspondents who had recently paid a visit to the Chinese Communist areas. Apparently they returned clearly impressed with the sincerity of the war effort in Yenan and the integrity of the administration. The Communism in that area, however, is somewhat different from the Russian brand. For instance, their object is not to develop communal farms but to create a body of peasant proprietors by dividing up the larger estates on an equitable basis. From the Kuomintang point of view the presence of a Party, with an army and a Government of its own, controlling three or four Provinces, is a menace to the unity of China. No one is more keenly alive to the importance of a settlement of this question than President Chiang Kai-shek. When I left Chungking in June last negotiations were on foot between Dr Wang Shih-chieh, the sagacious spokesman of the Central Government, and Mr Chow En-lai, the Communist representative.

A somewhat sensational bit of news has just come through. General Ho Ying-chin has ceased to be War Minister and Dr Kung has ceased to be Finance Minister. General Ho Ying-chin was one of the first Chinese I met. I met him first at a delightful dinner party given by Caroe

in February 1943. Dr Kung was for ten years in charge of the Finance Department. I wondered what exactly was the significance of the resignation of two such outstanding personalities. Could it be that, as Gillett thought, it was a sequel to the recent setbacks suffered by the Chinese at Hengyang and elsewhere? No, I rather think it denotes a victory for what, for want of a better word, might be called liberalism, of which Dr Sun Fo, the son of the late Dr Sun Yat-Sen and the President of the Legislative Yuan, has been the consistent and courageous spokesman. General Ho Ying-chin is noted for his antipathy to Communism and has taken no trouble to conceal it; while Dr Kung's financial administration has been the target of widespread criticism. Besides, the removal of Dr Kung, President Chiang Kai-shek's brother-in-law, from this key post will cut the ground under the feet of those who take a malicious pleasure in casting gibes at 'the Soong dynasty' and the power it wields in China. The Generalissimo is a stern realist and has once more proved himself to be not merely the leader of a Party but the leader of a Nation.

Urumchi, Thursday, 23 *November*

The Chinese Government have very kindly asked the local authorities to fly me to Chungking; and I had been hoping to leave Urumchi today. But the Chinese planes are engaged elsewhere. Last night thirty soldiers, wounded in Ili, were flown into Urumchi; and more are expected. News has also come of the ghastly murder of a Chinese medical officer, his wife and two children at Ili. The Kuo Tse Kow Pass, which a hundred men can hold against a thousand, is said to be in the hands of the rebels; and the troops of Ma Pu-feng, the Muslim Governor of Kokonor, are reported to be on their way to Ili to deal with the Muslim rebels.

Yesterday we had a business interview with the Governor. Gillett made representations to him regarding certain problems affecting British subjects in Sinkiang. I admired the clarity and vigour with which he put the case. We also acquainted the Governor with the general impressions we had gained during our tours in southern Sinkiang. No one could have given a more patient hearing than Governor Wu Chung-hsin. A man of high ideals, he has a disarming manner and the knack of giving the soft answer which turneth away wrath.

In the afternoon Dr Yau, Commissioner of Health, Sinkiang, called on us. He was a member of 'the North-west Reconstruction Committee' of which Dr Lo Chia-lun was the Chairman. He told me that two or three months ago a lorry in which some doctors and nurses were coming from Central China to take up their appointments in Sinkiang was held up by bandits. The inmates were machine-gunned and eight members of the medical profession were killed.

At night we dined with the Russian Consul. It was a very friendly party. The Russian trade delegate, Mr Margoulian, sang Russian songs in his Paul Robeson voice and M. Evsev, the Russian Consul, and other guests joined. Vodka, cognac and champagne flowed freely. I was told that in Russia itself the strength of vodka was 40 per cent alcohol; but the vodka coming to Sinkiang contained 60 per cent 'so as to facilitate transportation'. Geoffrey Turral is an asset at these parties; he has a ready wit, a steady head and an iron liver. After his last experience at the Russian Consulate Gillett tried to avoid drinks. He said that he had turned a Muslim. But M. Pancratoff, a scholar and a linguist—he is learning Sanskrit and is an expert in Mongol, in which language he sang a pretty love song—reminded Gillett of the Chinese proverb that 'one Muslim is not a Muslim; two Muslims make half a Muslim; and three Muslims make one

Muslim'—a tribute to Muslim adaptability in China. As for myself, I stopped, as Confucius, according to the *Analects*, used to stop, 'just short of mental confusion'.

Urumchi, Friday, 24 November

To drink or not to drink is a question which has been debated in China from ancient times. Kings, poets and philosophers have aired their views on this subject. In this as in other matters Confucius followed the middle path; on his own drinking the only limit which he set was mental confusion. Taoist scholars have had a distinct partiality for wine. Chuang Tzu, an advanced exponent of the doctrines of Lao Tzu, the founder of Taoism, wrote as follows in the fourth century B.C.:

A drunken man who falls out of a cart, though he may suffer, yet will not die. His bones are jointed like those of other people, but he meets the accident under different conditions. His mental equilibrium is undisturbed. Unconscious of riding in the cart, he is equally unconscious of falling out of it. The ordinary ideas of life, death and fear, find no place in his breast; consequently, when thrown into collision with matter, he is not afraid. And if a man can thus get perfect equilibrium out of wine, how much more should he do so out of the resources of his own nature? It is there that the wise man takes refuge; and there no one can injure him. To those who would wreak vengeance upon him he opposes neither spear nor shield; nor does he heed the brick which some spiteful enemy may hurl at his head.

In Chinese literature wine is as favourite a subject as love in Sanskrit or English literature. Wang Chi, a writer of the sixth and seventh centuries (whose 'official career', according to Professor Giles in his *Gems of Chinese Literature*, 'was marred by his inability to keep sober') has written the following delightful eulogy of 'Drunk-land':

Drunk-land lies at I cannot say how many thousand li from the Middle Kingdom.[1] Its soil is uncultivated;

[1] China.

and it has no boundary. It has no hills nor dangerous cliffs. The climate is equable. Nowhere is there either darkness or light, cold or heat. Customs are everywhere the same. There are no towns; the inhabitants live scattered about. They are very refined; they neither love nor hate, nor rejoice, nor give way to anger. They inhale the breeze and drink the dew; they do not eat of the five cereals. Happy in their rest, dignified in their movements, they mingle freely with birds, beasts, fishes and crustaceans. They have no chariots, nor boats, nor weapons of any kind. . . . By the time of the Ch'ins (255 B.C.) and the Hans (206 B.C.) the Middle Kingdom was in a state of confusion and collapse, and communications with Drunk-land were cut off. However, certain enlightened friends of mine often slipped across on the sly. The poets Yuan Chi, T'ai Ch'ien and others to the number of ten or a dozen, went off to Drunk-land, disappeared there and never came back; they died there and were buried in its earth. They are known in the Middle Kingdom as the Wine Immortals. Ah me! How different are the customs of the people of Drunk-land! How pure and peaceful they are! Well, I have been there myself, and therefore I have written this record.

Wine has inspired some of the greatest poetry in Chinese literature. Li Po who lived in the eighth century and is generally regarded as the greatest of China's poets was a founder of a drunken club called 'The Six Idlers of the Bamboo Brook' and also belonged to 'The Eight Idlers of the Wine-cup'. He is said to have been drowned by leaning over the gunwale of a boat in a drunken effort to embrace the reflection of the moon.

The propriety of drinking is a question to which Government too has given attention from ancient times to the present day. Today the New Life Movement discourages drinking and condemns it in public. And long ago the Duke of Ch'ou, who successfully ruled over China as King Ch'eng in the twelfth century B.C., issued the following Decree about drunkenness:

Thus saith the King:—'Make known these important commands in the State of Mei.

'When our great and good father, King Wen, laid the foundations of our Empire in the West, daily and nightly he warned his officials saying, "For sacrifice you may use wine". And whenever God has favoured the people, it has been because wine was in use only at the great sacrifices But whenever God has sent down his terrors, and the people have become disorganized and have lost their moral balance, this has always been due to indulgence in wine. So too when States, small and great alike, have similarly suffered, misuse of wine has always been the cause of their downfall.

'Hear, then, to these instructions, all you high officers and others: when you have done your duty in ministering to your parents and serving your sovereign, then you may drink and eat until you are tipsy and replete. Again, when after constant examination and a course of virtuous conduct you have ministered with sacrifices to the spirits, then you may proceed to indulge yourselves with festivity. Thus, you will be serving your sovereign, God will approve of your great virtue, and you will never be forgotten by the Royal House.

'The drunkenness of the last ruler of the House of Yin, and of his creatures, caused the resentment of the people to be heard on high; and God sent down calamity on you. Because of these excesses God is not cruel: people bring punishment on themselves.

'It is not a pleasure to me to issue these numerous commands. The ancients had a saying, "A man should not seek to see himself in water, but as reflected in other people". Ought we not then to look back to the House of Yin, which has now finished, in order to secure repose for our own times?

'If persons congregate together to drink let them all be seized and sent to me to the capital; I will put them to death. Those officers of the House of Yin who have always been accustomed to drink may be exempted from this penalty. Let them be taught; and then, if they obey, they may be allowed to enjoy distinction. Otherwise, I will show no pity.'

What a remarkable document! How nicely it balances the various considerations, moral, secular and religious! What consideration it shows to custom and usage! How

it combines strength and gentleness, threat and persuasion! And one realizes the antiquity of Chinese civilization when one remembers that this order was issued more than 3,000 years ago.

Urumchi, Saturday, 25 November

It has been snowing steadily since last evening. Not knowing that it had started snowing, I had a hot bath and went out in the biting cold to dinner with Turral. That has given me a sore throat which I am trying to shake off by sucking an aspirin morning and evening. However, Turral's dinner was worth the sore throat. He has an excellent cook who received her training in Vladivostok, and was working under one of the Russian Advisers to General Sheng Shih-ts'ai. I have never had chikor more deliciously cooked. It was the chikor which Mir Hamza shot in the Toqsun gorges some 10 days ago; but in this cold climate it keeps for weeks. Turral told me of a duck which he shot in Manchuria in October and ate in the following May.

From his experience last year Turral tells me it will probably go on snowing till tomorrow evening. Then there will be bright weather followed by another fall of snow; then a break, then again a snow-fall—and so throughout the winter. And every fall of snow will result in a further fall in temperature.

I am never tired of seeing snow. It used to snow occasionally in Fort Sandeman; and then we all—Anujee, the children and their vivacious and untiring 'Teacher'[1] used to go romping in the hills near Kapip. What a charming spot Kapip was with its perennial spring on which Fort Sandeman depended for its water-supply! From Kapip one road branched off through the Shirani area to Manikhwa; another through the Babar and Kibzai area

1 Miss Swamikannu.

to Loralai; and a third through the Mandokhel territory to Fort Sandeman. Very different from each other were those tribes. According to the custom-based schedule by which I had to assess compensation for murder (we used to have a murder a day in the Zhob Agency) the life of a Shirani was worth Rs. 600, of a Mandokhel Rs. 1,500 and of a Kibzai Rs. 3,000. The vicinity of Kapip has been the scene of some sensational happenings. It was here that Major Finnis, a former Political Agent, was shot dead; and it was here that in my own time as Political Agent, that notorious outlaw Pale waylaid the mail lorry from Harnai and threatened to burn the passengers alive. Actually he contented himself by shooting down six!

It is exactly a hundred days since I started from Srinagar on this trip and a hundred and twenty since I left home. Since I left Travancore, I have travelled 2,000 miles by train, 800 miles on horse, yak and foot and 2,000 miles by car; and I shall presently have to do 2,500 miles by air to Chungking. It is a far cry from Travancore to Tihwa; and I must confess I sometimes feel home-sick—especially at nights. Here, in accordance with Chinese custom, we have our dinner before 6. Time drags after dinner; the light is poor and my reading glasses are broken. Reading is therefore difficult; and, after being together for 54 days, even Gillett's conversational powers and my listening capacity are getting exhausted. So I go to bed early; and in the small hours of the morning, to quote a poem of Li Po's—

> I wake, and moonbeams play around my bed,
> Glittering like hoar frost to my wondering eyes;
> Up towards the glorious moon I raise my head,
> Then lay me down—and thoughts of home arise.

Urumchi, Sunday, 26 November

It is still snowing. I have never seen such snow before. In Fort Sandeman we used to get an occasional fall of

snow; but it turned all too quickly into slush. You get snow in England; but it comes like a weekend guest for Christmas or the New Year. Here, in Urumchi, it comes to stay—as I, too, seem to have done, for I still do not know when I shall be able to fly to Chungking. Roads and lanes, branches of trees and the roofs of houses are all covered with snow; and it has every intention of remaining till the spring.

This evening I went to see a Chinese play. It was a spacious newly-built theatre in which a number of anti-Japanese slogans were inscribed. The audience consisted mostly of the coolie classes. Mr Ch'ü's explanation was that because of the rise in prices it was only the coolie classes who could afford to indulge in such luxuries as theatre-going. Wages have risen with prices, but not the income of other classes, such as officials. In Chungking it was a familiar saying that a rickshaw-puller earned more than a Professor.

Four items were staged on the theatre. The best was called 'The Drunken Concubine'. It was a leaf from the celebrated Yang Kuei-fei's life. She was the most beautiful and all-powerful concubine of Kao-tsung, an Emperor of the T'ang dynasty, who ruled over China in the seventh century A.D. Her domination over the Emperor's body and mind was complete. On one occasion, however, the Emperor has a tiff with her and deliberately goes into the chamber of another concubine. Consumed with anger and jealousy, Yang Kuei-fei gets drunk and actually makes love to the eunuchs guarding her. There is an amusing scene in which the eunuchs excuse themselves from responding to her advances, at first on the ground of their loyalty to the Emperor and when this plea was of no avail, on account of their incapacity to oblige her; and she slaps them. The part of Yang Kuei-fei was taken by a young and accomplished actress who used to be famous in Vladivostok in the pre-war days, Shan Yu-lan. She played

her difficult part to perfection—a woman reeling with wine, wrath, love and jealousy.

Yang Kuei-fei is one of the most romantic characters in Chinese history. Originally the wife of a jade Prince and then a nun, she had been betrothed to the Crown Prince of China. Emperor Kao-tsung, however, fell in love with her at the age of sixty and snatched her away from his son. Thereafter he was completely under her thumb. At that time there appeared in the Court a Turki adventurer called Au Lu-shan. He passed off as a buffoon; Yang Kuei-fei was titillated by him, and his witticisms and mannerisms were an endless source of amusement to her. He had free access to the harem; he was even raised to the position of a Class II Prince —a title reserved for members of the royal family. Au Lu-shan, however, was playing for high stakes. When he thought the moment was ripe he cast off his mask and led a rebellion against the Emperor. Loyang fell and Ch'angan, the capital, was besieged. The people rallied to the support of the king but demanded the head of Yang Kuei-fei. Nothing became her in life so much as the leaving of it. She offered to sacrifice her life for the sake of her husband and kingdom. True to her word she hanged herself with a silken rope from a tree; and the old Emperor looked on with anguished eyes. This scene has been celebrated in Chinese song and legend over and over again and has formed the subject of one of the most famous poems in Chinese literature, 'The Everlasting Wrong' by Prince Li Po.

Urumchi, Monday, 27 November

Sir Eric Teichman, in his *Journey Through Chines Turkestan*, which contains an account of his official tri to Sinkiang in 1936, said that Urumchi was a sinister town Today there must be many residents of Urumchi wh would agree with this description. For there is a feelir

of suppressed nervousness in the air. It is more pronounced today, for tomorrow takes place the 'Id Qurban' when, people fear, the zero hour may strike and Qazaqs in Urumchi too, as in Ili, may create trouble. This feeling manifests itself in a variety of ways. The Nan Kuan, or Southern Suburb, in which we are staying is becoming more and more deserted. More and more Chinese families are moving into the city within the wall. Last night, we dined with Turral. Apart from Gillett and myself, Lieut. Cooper, the American Assistant Naval Attaché, was also there. What a Naval Attaché is doing in a place which is farther removed from the sea than any other spot in the world, I do not know. After dinner Turral told his Russian maid and Chinese cook that they were free to go home. 'May we sleep in the kitchen tonight?' they asked; evidently they were afraid of going home. And not long after dinner our chauffeur came in and said that he must go home at once; it was not wise to stay out too long on a night like this. And our Chinese servants slept with the lights on.

Every day Mr Ch'ü likes to make our flesh creep at breakfast by telling us of certain happenings in Urumchi. His latest story is that this house is haunted. An exorciser was brought here to dispel the ghost some time ago. The ghost did not disappear, but the exorciser did!

I know of a number of haunted houses in India, but have never lived in one. In Ceylon we unwittingly spent a night in a haunted house once; and then Anujee was on the point of seeing a ghost. We had been travelling along the lonely road from Sigiriya to Polonnaruwa. Night fell; and we betook ourselves to a rest-house. I forget its name; but it was beautifully situated on a lake. Anujee was tired and went to bed to snatch a couple of hours' rest; and we all—the Hamid Alis and the Rajus—remained in the drawing-room. In a few minutes Anujee

joined us. She could not remain in that room any longer, she said; she somehow felt that there was someone present there. We attributed this to her fatigue. When we returned to Kandy, however, and mentioned it to our friends, the Jonklaases and others, they said that that rest-house and in particular the room in which Anujee tried to sleep—the room to the right as you enter—had the reputation of being haunted. The keeper of the rest-house, who had been there for 30 years and had died under mysterious circumstances, was supposed to haunt it. Jonklaas himself had seen him once!

I have heard a number of ghost stories; in my childhood ghosts were more real to me than men. Anujee likes ghost stories too. But she insists that on the days on which she hears, reads or relates ghost stories, I should not go to sleep before she does. Almost all the stories we have heard, however, are secondhand and could be rejected as hearsay evidence. One story, however, which was related to us by a person who actually saw a ghost, we find it impossible not to believe. Patney[1], an old friend of ours, than whom no one could be less psychic, was once posted to Assam. The Patneys stayed in a spacious house which had not been occupied for some years. In that house he was always ill. At dinner he would suddenly feel that someone under the table was pulling his legs (literally!). He attributed this to the state of his nerves and did not mention it even to his wife. He continued to be ill; and the doctor who was looking after him told him that he would not be responsible for his life unless he left that haunted house. One night Patney saw the lights in one of the rooms. He thought the servants had been careless and had forgotten to put them out. He opened the door; and to his amazement he saw a number of weird figures, some naked and others clothed in red, dancing. The moment he went in, the lights went out.

[1] Lt-Col. S. L. Patney, I.M.S.

So did the figures. So did the Patneys; for they left the house the next morning.

Even stranger is the story of a Chinese ghost which was related to Gillett by the Administrative Superintendent and the Chief of Police, Karashahr. A murder had taken place in their jurisdiction. They could obtain no clue to the murderer. A few months after the murder, a woman, claiming to be possessed by the spirit of the deceased, named the murderer, related the circumstances under which he was murdered, and pointed out the scene of occurrence, where indeed his dead body was found. That woman did not know the deceased at all; but in those moments when she was possessed by his spirit she spoke and acted exactly like him. And on the strength of her evidence the murderer was arrested and convicted.

Urumchi, Tuesday, 28 *November*

If misfortunes never come singly, nor, one felt today, does good fortune. Today the Urumchi outlook, mental as well as physical, took a turn for the better. The Id has passed off peacefully. The Qazaqs of Urumchi have kept quiet; so have the ghosts of Nan Hua Yuan. After the incessant snows of the last few days the weather has cleared up; and the sun is shining. We had an excellent lunch at Turral's; and after lunch Chaucer and I had phenomenal luck at bridge against Turral and Ma, the Manager of the local bank.

Thus, exhilarated, Mr Ch'ü and I strolled out into the city. We passed through the Nan Kuan or Southern Suburb, sometimes called the Russian quarter. To our left was the Russian Trade Agency, formerly dominant and now dormant. To our right were the spacious grounds of the Russian Consulate, built in the palmy Czarist days. We then passed the 'Social Service Bureau', where one could have a good meal and a clean haircut at reasonable

rates. One could get married here too! One of the recent innovations in China is the institution of 'mass weddings'. Formerly in China as well as in India, except in Malabar, where our marriage ceremony has always been simplicity itself, a wedding was attended by reckless extravagance, and it is in order to obviate this that mass weddings have been instituted. I attended one of these marriages in Chungking. Some 25 young girls, elegantly dressed, stood on one side of the hall; and 25 young men on the other side. From both sides they walked up, one by one, to the platform, bowed to an official, signed their name in the book and returned from the platform, arm in arm. They had been married! And whom the Social Service Bureau has joined together, let no man put asunder!

We then passed an old mosque which had been turned into a school. Where there is a superfluity of religious institutions, the Chinese have no compunction in turning them to secular use. Near Chengtu I saw a couple of old Buddhist monasteries which were used as barracks; and in Kashgar I saw a Chinese temple which had been converted into a Chinese school. What a howl of horror would rend the heavens in India, if such sacrilege was committed!

On both sides of the road and on the roofs of houses snow lay in heaps. And the trees looked as if spring had come; they seemed to bear blossoms of snow. The roads had been cleared of snow but still looked white as if rice powder had been strewn on them for an Emperor to pass through. While approaching the city we saw a pool of mud. So deep was the mud that the story goes that there a camel had been drowned! The streets were still slippery; and I saw many persons, including Mr Ch'ü, slip and fall. I myself was safe in my charaks[1], ideal for snow and sand.

[1] Raw-hide boots.

We entered the walled city of Urumchi through an imposing gateway, recently constructed. The first street is called Chung Cheng Lu after the courtesy name of the Generalissimo. It is a broad street of which no headquarter town in the world need be ashamed. On both sides are multi-storied buildings, accommodating banks, Government offices and cultural associations. From Chung Cheng Lu we turned right to Lin Sen Lu named after the late octogenarian President, Lin Sen. This street normally commands a lovely view of Bogdo Ola. Today it was wrapped in snow, thus justifying its Mongol name, 'the Spirit Mountain'. Facing us was the new theatre in which 'The Drunken Concubine' amused us a few days ago. To our left was the Governor's residence. In front of the house an extensive park is being laid out. Hundreds of mud huts have been acquired and razed to the ground, trees have been planted and paths are being chalked out.

On our way back, we saw the curved roofs of an old temple, dwarfed by the pretentious modern buildings around it and hiding its head, as if in shame. How elegant it looked and how different from the 'compradoric' buildings around it! Here was something reminiscent of China, old China, the China of my boyhood dreams, China which, even like the curved roofs of her old buildings, came down to earth and yet looked up to Heaven. It is a pity that modern China should have so completely abandoned the old style. In India we have, as in New Delhi, made some attempt to reconcile the old and the new style of architecture. How far we have succeeded is a point on which experts differ.

Urumchi, Wednesday, 29 November

The plane which is to take me to Chungking has not yet arrived. Bogdo is still veiled in mist; and that is

ominous for an airman. The flight between Lanchow and Urumchi is not one on which risks could be taken. A couple of years ago one of the Russian planes, plying between Hami and Alma Ata, was lost on the T'ien Shan. So I must wait for the weather to clear up before I can go to Chungking.

In the meantime, I amused myself by reading more of Giles' *Gems of Chinese Literature*. There are gems in prose as well as in poetry. I enjoyed the former far more than the latter. It is impossible to do justice to poetry in translation, unless one is, like Fitzgerald, a poet oneself and takes liberties with the original, as Giles never does, and as Fitzgerald did with the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. As Giles himself says, 'translations are but traitors at the best; translations may be moonlight and water while the originals are sunlight and wine'.

Yet through moonlight and water one can get some idea of the nature of poetry and the genius of the people who wrote it. One feature which an Indian notices in Chinese poetry is the comparative absence of metaphors. Indian poetry abounds in metaphors. Our classical writers seem unable to write poetry without indulging in similes and metaphors. And what metaphors! Striking, audacious, beautiful, sometimes singularly incongruous and always supremely effective! But the Chinese poets manage to obtain the same effect without having resort to any figures of speech. Another difference which one notices is the comparative absence of love. I mean the love of man and woman; not the friendship of man and man, because that is a favourite theme in Chinese poetry. This reluctance to celebrate love in poetry has sometimes been attributed to the Chinese social system. In China love begins not before but after marriage; and then it is not worth talking about! But this is hardly an adequate explanation, for in India too love often begins after marriage; and yet in Indian poetry love is described

in all its aspects and moods and nuances, physical, sensuous and spiritual. If love is not a frequent theme of Chinese poetry, friendship certainly is. The separation between friends, the thought of friends from a distant country and the nostalgia of exile are subjects which recur in Chinese poetry. Here is a short poem from Prince Li Po, one of the most celebrated T'ang poets:

> The wild geese come with no message at all;
> Remote is my home which dreams can scarcely reach.
> The sorrow of separation is like the grass of spring;
> The farther you travel the more it grows.

Still another feature of Chinese poetry is the absence of war poems. In this respect it is very different from European poetry.

> Four things greater than all things are,—
> Women and Horses and Power and War

wrote Kipling in one of his ballads. The Chinese like to talk of war as little as of love. If they deal with it at all they speak not of the glory and exaltation of battle but of the waste, the cruelty, the imbecility of it all. Here is a typical poem—

> A cup of pure wine—my native land is ten thousand miles away;
> The Huns have not yet been conquered; I cannot go home.
> The Tartar flute comes wailing over the land frost-bound,
> Hardly can one sleep—
> The General's white hair and the soldier's tears.

Urumchi, Thursday, 30 *November*

There was bright moonlight when we returned from Turral's house last night. It was the brighter for its union with snow. Urumchi is all covered with snow; and moonlight, lying on it and reflected by it, has an uncommon glamour. It does not look like an emanation from a foreign planet; it looks like a substance exuding from the earth's own snowy breast.

After dinner M. Evsev, aided by vodka and Gillett, broke out into song. I like Russian folk-songs; my favourite had the mellifluous name, 'Kalinka'. The only song in which the whole party (except myself) could join was the Marseillaise. Turning to war songs, Cooper said that America had not produced, during the war, any songs comparable to those which were popular in the last war. Was that the case in Russia, he asked? No, said M. Evsev, Russia had produced a number of war songs which were on everyone's lips. The most popular had the refrain: 'This is a holy war'.

I can well imagine how holy this war must be to the Russians. The Soviet Consul has presented us with a few books. One of them is called *It Actually Happened.* It purports to be an authenticated account of German atrocities in Russia. I read it with that horror with which I saw the Grand Guignol plays which used to be popular after the last war and catered to a nerve-racked generation. The book opened with the following extract from the *Handbook for the German Soldier,* sanctioned by Hitler: 'Stamp out of your soul all feeling of pity or compassion; kill every Russian, every Soviet citizen. Do not falter even though an old man or woman, a girl or a boy stands before you.' The book goes on to show that the German soldier has followed this precept only too literally.

To what lengths of diabolic ingenuity the Germans could go is shown by the following story which is reproduced as given in the book:

The Germans had their billets in the village of Kholm, Moghilev region. What they had demanded from Aksenova, the sixteen-year-old collective farm girl and why she had aroused their animosity, no one ever knew. But her execution was witnessed by all the villagers, and such barbarism had not been seen in those parts for more than one thousand years, since those ancient times when the Russian Prince Igor was executed. The girl was taken to the forest not far from the village. The Fascists

chose two spruce trees standing at a short distance from each other. On the very top they threw a loop and bent the trees down with ropes to the ground. Then they dragged the girl to the trees. She lay helpless, neither able to move nor to cry out, for she had been gagged. She was laid on the ground. While several of the Fascists held the trees with all their might, the remainder quickly fastened the girl's legs to the tops. They were bound tightly, firmly. Many times the rope was tested to see that there were no weak places in it. When all was ready, the officer in charge of the execution waved his hand. The trees, instantly released, swung back into position and the girl's body was torn in two.

I thought of Heine who took his little son to a glittering parade of German soldiers. The boy watched it all with breathless interest; and at the end of it turned to his father and said: 'Father, were these soldiers once men?'

Urumchi, Friday, 1 *December*

Yesterday, Chaucer Wu rang me up and said that my plane had left Lanchow and would be arriving in a few hours and that it would definitely leave for Chungking today. I therefore hastily packed up my things, paid my farewell calls and changed my Sinkiang dollars into Central Government dollars. I am now worth lakhs! In Kashgar I changed Rs. 2,500 into kochins. I thought I would have to pay for my air passage from Urumchi to Chungking; but the Chinese Government are going to transport me free—a courteous gesture, in keeping with the kindness I have received from the Chinese Government ever since I crossed into China on the 15th of September. Rs. 2,500 fetched 100,000 Sinkiang dollars; and the 100,000 Sinkiang dollars have now fetched 500,000 Central Government dollars. I have never felt so rich since I was in Berlin soon after the last war when a pound was equal to 36,000 marks.

In the afternoon, however, Chaucer Wu told me, over a bottle of champagne with which he bade me *bon voyage*, that after all the plane was not arriving today. It had left Lanchow, but was unable to proceed beyond Chia Yü Kuan. It should, however, be here tomorrow.

When I made my farewell calls, the sun was shining; but it was bitterly cold. In our house, which is heated by means of large Russian stoves, one does not realize how cold it has been. I used to think that Kashgar was cold; there the temperature used to drop below freezing point. Here, every night, the temperature has fallen below zero. But the hardened residents of Urumchi tell me that winter is yet to come. The temperature will drop still further until it touches, as it did last year, 40° below zero. Strange that Fate should have destined me, who was born and brought up in Travancore where the temperature hardly varies throughout the year, to work in places where the maximum temperature reaches 120° and the minimum 40° below zero.

This year the cold in these parts appears to have set in earlier than usual. The talk of the town today was that it snowed in Turfan last evening. Turfan is below sea level; and this is the first time in living memory that snow has fallen in Turfan. This unprecedented event has stirred General Chu Shao-liang to write a poem entitled 'It Snows in Turfan'. In China military and poetic genius often go together. The one redeeming grace of Wang Ching-wei, the head of the puppet Government in Nanking, whose death has just been announced, was that he could compose poetry. Towards the end of the third century A.D. there lived in China a poet who was also a military genius, Liu Kun. It is said that while defending the city of Chin Yang against the Tartars, with no prospect of holding out, he mounted a tower by moonlight and played on the Tartar pipe. The besiegers were so overcome with emotion and home-sickness that they raised

the siege. I doubt whether General Chu Shao-liang will employ these tactics against the Qazaqs!

I also paid a farewell call on the Governor, Wu Chung-hsin. He has presented me with a lovely Khotan carpet of a unique pattern; and I have sent him a silver bowl and a piece of Indian brocade. The more one sees him the more one respects him. There is an old world grace and simplicity about him. How naïvely he, while advising me to put on warmer clothes, pulled up his trousers and showed me the thick woollen underwear which he was wearing! Whether Governor Wu Chung-hsin is the man to control the Frontier Province with its medley of clans and tribes and its borders touching the Soviet Republics of Kazakstan, Kirghistan and Tajikstan and the Indian embryonic State of Pakistan I am not competent to judge, but the unfathomable goodwill and transparent sincerity of this distinguished scholar will win the hearts of men.

Urumchi, Saturday, 2 December

Officially I no longer exist in Urumchi. I have bidden farewell to all my friends and given and received farewell presents. I am now waiting for my plane which is apparently held up in Chia Yü Kuan. Chaucer Wu tells me that the engine is frozen!

I am getting a little restive over this delay in leaving Urumchi. But I have had some compensation. Today I had a superb view of Bogdo Ola. Its three peaks were clearly visible. The western peak is 20,976 feet high, the central, 21,240 feet and the eastern, 21,356 feet. Behind the snowy foothills to the east of Urumchi Bogdo Ola reared its head majestically, like the sacred White Elephant of Indian legends behind a whitewashed wall.

One of the joys of the long journey from India was that Nature presented the traveller at regular intervals with some of the grandest mountain peaks in the world.

On the 27th of August, after a long and dreary march from Mushkin, I suddenly saw Nanga Parbat in all its glory. On the 5th of September I saw, from the 800-year-old castle of the Mir of Hunza, that pinnacle of snow, Rakhaposhi, rising from the Astor River to greet the blue heavens. On the 24th of September, on emerging from Tashkurghan, I saw 'the Father of Ice Mountains', Muztagh Ata, sacred to the Buddhists in the first ten centuries of the Christian era and to the Kirghiz in succeeding centuries. On the 20th of October, after days of hiding in the eternal dust haze of Sinkiang, Mount Qungar suddenly revealed itself to us between Yarkand and Yangihissar. On the 6th of November we got a glimpse of Khan Tengri, a ghostly protuberance from the heavenly mountains. And now we are feasting our eyes on that 'Olympus of Dzungaria' Bogdo Ola, which is as sacred to the Mongols as Muztagh Ata is to the Kirghiz.

Urumchi, Sunday, 3 December

My plane has arrived at last; and we were to have left this morning at 8. I have, however, just received a telephone message that owing to weather conditions it would be impossible to fly today. I am glad to have another day here, for I can finish a delightful book which Turral has kindly lent me, namely, James Agate's *Brief Chronicles*. I derive a twofold pleasure from reading Agate's reviews of Elizabethan plays on the modern stage. I see him cast a sudden searchlight on some of my favourite Shakespearian characters; and at the same time it brings back to my mind some superb acting which I myself had seen such as Gielgud's Hamlet and Paul Robeson's Othello.

I also picked up a very different type of book from Turral's library called *The Making of a Pioneer* by two very enterprising ladies, Mildred Cable and Francesca

French. Judging by the title I thought it might be the story of someone like Sir Francis Younghusband. But no! it contains the record of a man of different calibre, 'a man whom God sent forth into Central Asia' and who, the book insists, was 'heaven-ordained and not man-appointed'. The Rev. Mather—for that was his name—himself thought so. He had been a missionary in Anhwei when 'the Call' came. 'The Lord', he writes, 'plucked me out of Anhwei and planted me right away in the north-west.'

I nearly put the book back in the shelf, for while nothing interests me more than religion and nothing excites my admiration more than the selfless humanitarian work of many missionaries in India, nothing bores me so much as propaganda, whether it be political or religious. I found, however, that the book contained a number of letters written by the Rev. Mather from Urumchi between 1914 and 1923. They throw an occasional sidelight on the political conditions in Sinkiang after the Revolution of 1911. The Revolution had just broken out, but Sinkiang remained outside the pale. The purdah of Sinkiang was jealously protected by its lord and master, General Yang Tseng-hsin. The Rev. Mather writes that whenever the Governor went out he was escorted by 200 cavalry who carried flags of red, yellow and blue silk and by a number of men blowing trumpets. His wife too went about in regal style; and on one occasion the Rev. Mather saw her escort making six men in two wooden cangues[1], three men in each, kneel down until she had driven past.

Once the Governor visited Sir Aurel Stein who had been staying with the Rev. Mather. 'About 10 a.m.', he writes, 'we heard three salutes fired and knew that the Governor was leaving his yamen. Very soon there was a fanfare of trumpets and a galloping of horsemen; then the

[1] High wooden collar, fastened round the neck as a punishment.

Governor drove up in a four-wheeled carriage. He had his little boy with him and was attended by a host of civil and military officials. We went out and received him; and he came into the house followed by about 80 officials and soldiers, who swarmed all over the place while dozens more peered through the windows, to watch what was going on.' How different is the present Governor, Wu Chung-hsin, who called on me, attended only by his Interpreter, and was seen inspecting the defences of the city on foot with no more than a couple of gendarmes about him!

Certain incidents related by the Rev. Mather made me wonder whether Sinkiang was in the twentieth century or in the barbaric ages. In 1916, a plot against the Governor was suspected; and the manner in which the Governor dealt with it is described as follows:

On the 14th February, the Governor gave a feast in honour of an Inspector who had recently arrived and invited two suspected men. While the guests were enjoying themselves the Governor left the table and gave a pre-arranged signal at which some soldiers entered the dining hall and cut one of the men down in cold blood. The Governor then returned saying: 'Do not disturb yourselves, gentlemen, let us go on with the feast.' They did so, with the bleeding corpse lying there. Later, he gave another signal and the soldiers fell on the other man, who was somewhat prepared and made a desperate resistance, upsetting the table, but twenty men slashed at him and he was cut down. When all was over the Governor begged the guests' pardon and said he was obliged to carry out the proceedings in this way as these were desperate men; and he could not afford to run risks. Meanwhile the soldiers arrested six smaller officials and put them in the black dungeon, a dark hole, underground, cold and without any sanitary conveniences.

Tradition dies hard; and Tihwa had yet to 'return to civilization'.

Governor Yang Tseng-hsin himself fell a victim to the assassin's knife in 1928 and was succeeded by Chin

Shu-jen. In his time a Moslem revolt broke out in Kansu and threatened to engulf the whole province. We read that in 1931 'there was trouble in Kansu when a young Moslem military leader was pillaging one city after another; and his advance was steadily towards Turkestan. It was rumoured that his ambition was to overthrow the Government in that province. The Governor himself was in a state of panic; and being panic-stricken he committed acts of folly, cruelty and revenge which alienated those who, wisely handled, might have helped him.'

The Tungan attack on Urumchi is vividly described. 'In January the storm burst and Urumchi was attacked by Moslem forces. There was terrible slaughter and public buildings were used as hospitals for the wounded. . . . The actual fighting lasted for days; and as the city was attacked by some ten thousand rebels, it was shut up for six weeks. Thousands were said to be killed; and the battlefield outside the town was a sight never to be forgotten.'

In the midst of all this tumult the Rev. Mather carried on his missionary work. The spirit which animated him may be seen from a letter he wrote home asking friends 'to pray for the Mongols of Sinkiang, many thousands of them without hope, without God and without a preacher'.

'Without hope, without God and without a preacher'! It reminded me of the comments of my old Collector, J. C. Molony, on proselytizing religions, in his fascinating *Book of South India*. There he contrasts the spirit of the hymn

> The heathen in his blindness
> Bows down to wood and stone

with the tolerance of the *Bhagavadgita* in which Krishna tells Arjuna:

> Even those who, contrary to the scriptures, worship alien gods are, provided they do so with faith, in reality worshipping Me.

Sometimes the Rev. Mather felt depressed at the extent of the response to his mission and at other times he felt elated. 'When there is preaching', he wrote, 'the people listen splendidly. I have no need to take a fiddle to get a crowd here and some will stand for two or three hours.' Yet Turral tells me there is not a trace left of his work. The track of this pioneer, whom 'God plucked out of Anhwei and planted in the north-west', has perished in the dust. But the old caravan routes are still there; and Mongols and others go gaily along without God (except their own) and without a preacher. And Mildred Cable and Francesca French deplore, at the end of their book that 'the bush grows quickly and the virgin forest soon closes in with its tangle of undergrowth over the pioneer's track'.

Perhaps it is best to leave the virgin forest alone.

CHAPTER IX

THE KANSU CORRIDOR

Ansi, Monday, 4 December

I left Urumchi this morning at 10. Gillett came to the aerodrome; and it was with genuine regret that I parted from him. For 64 days he and I had been companions, sharing experiences which fall to the lot of but few in his service or mine or indeed outside the service. He was the architect of this trip and carried it through without the slightest hitch. Turral, for whom I had conceived a real liking, could not come to the aerodrome as he had bronchitis. Mr Chaucer Wu came to see me off on behalf of the Provincial Government; and Mr Speransky came to say good-bye on behalf of the Soviet Consul-General.

On leaving Urumchi we had a close-up view of Bodgo Ola, basking in the sun. A few minutes later we saw, thousands of feet below us and indeed below sea level, the twin towns of Turfan and Toqsun, lightly covered with snow. Within an hour the weather changed; the atmosphere became milky white; and we went on seemingly blindly over high mountains, not knowing whither we were going. Our companion plane was forced to land at Hami; but our dare-devil pilot went on through heavy mist and fog over the dangerous Gorilla Gorge (Hsin Hsin Sha) to Ansi in the Kansu corridor.

I am sorry we did not stop at Hami. I had always wanted to see Hami, or, to use its Turki name, Kamul, of which Marco Polo has given some amusing accounts. Camul, says Marco Polo, has the custom of husbands giving up not only their houses but also their wives for the entertainment of strangers. The women are in truth very handsome and fully disposed to conform in this respect

to the injunction of their husbands. In the middle of the thirteenth century Mangu Khan stopped this practice, but after three years the people petitioned him to allow them to return to it saying it was pleasing to the gods who blessed them in consequence. His answer was: 'Since you want your shame, have it then.' In Marco Polo's time the people were, to use his words, 'all idolaters'; but the advent of Islam made little difference and Prjevalsky wrote in 1879 that 'the women were free and easy in their manners, just as they were in Marco Polo's time'.

It was, however, not this feature which attracted me to Hami, but the fact that the people were 'all idolaters' even after they had ceased to be so in the south; for by Marco Polo's time Kashgar and Khotan had become strongholds of Islam. Hami was thus one of the last places where Buddhism survived; and its prevalence is shown by the colossal Buddhas discovered by Stein at Ara-tan, north-east of Hami. Apart from this antiquarian interest, Hami is the last town in Turkestan for caravans bound to the interior of China; and from this point I would have liked to cast one last long lingering look at the land of the Turkis in which we had spent some delightful weeks and from which we were now moving into a different sphere.

Chia Yü Kuan, Tuesday, 5 December

We are no longer in the Province of Sinkiang but in the 'Kansu Corridor'. I realized the meaning of this expression this morning when I stood on the roof of the air station at Ansi and looked round. On one side were the mountains; on the other was the Gobi Desert stretching into infinity. To the north is one of those international sore points, Outer Mongolia. It is *de jure* an integral part of China and *de facto* a separate State. Practically self-governing since 1911, Outer Mongolia

M. C. G

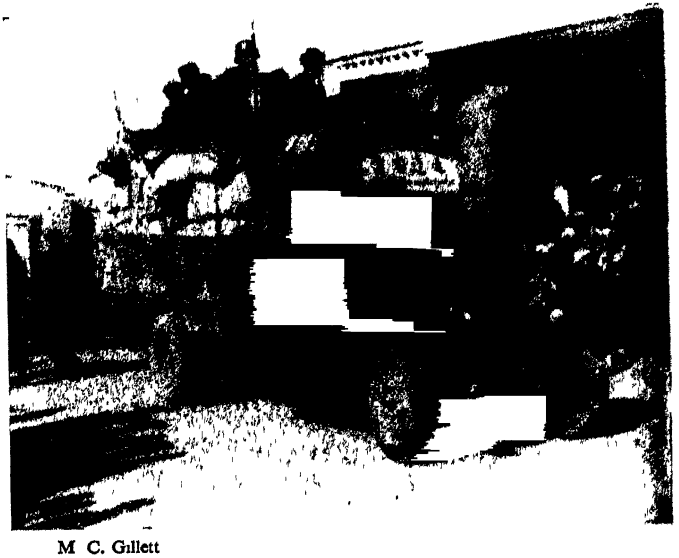
The hat market, Kashgar, 1938

Stalls in the Idgah Square, Kashgar, 1938

M. C. G

M. C Gillett

The bus in which we travelled



M C. Gillett

The lorry which accompanied us from Kashgar to Urumchi

asserted its independence in 1924 and called itself the 'Mongolian People's Republic'. In 1936 she entered into a Pact of Mutual Assistance with the U.S.S.R., though the latter had recognized in 1924 that Outer Mongolia was an integral part of the Republic of China and agreed to respect China's sovereignty therein.

Last night it was bitterly cold at Ansi though the officer in charge of the air station tried to alleviate our misery by lighting a stove in our room. In doing so, however, he merely increased my misery, because the stove was leaking and the smoke gave me a splitting headache. This morning the stove was mercifully removed to heat up the engines of the plane which had frozen overnight. We wanted to leave Ansi at 8 but it was not till 12 that one of the engines started working. The other, in spite of heating and coaxing, refused to move; and we had reconciled ourselves to the prospect of spending another night in Ansi when, at about 1.30, it started roaring. Before it had time to change its mind we all got on board and floated for an hour over a gleaming sea of snow. By this time the weather had again become dismal; and unable to go on to Lanchow, we landed at Chia Yu Kuan.

We are a motley crowd on this plane. There are half a dozen Russians—men, women and children—of whom the youngest is a baby, 20 days old. There are eight or nine Chinese, one of whom is a refugee, the wife of an airman, in Qazaq-beleaguered Ili. The only passenger who knew English was Mr Shu-jen Yang of the China Diplomatic service. He was of the greatest help to me and I was much attracted by him. Modern in every sense—he can speak English and German perfectly and Russian tolerably and can read French—he has, at the same time, a genuine feeling for the old civilization of China. This he has inherited from his parents who, he told me, were ardent Buddhists. In his sixteen years' service he had worked in Moscow, Cuba, Finland and Berlin.

When, I wondered, would Indian youths have such varied experience? With dominion status staring us in the face, is it not time we began to form a nucleus for the future Indian Diplomatic service? And I hope this service will be predominantly a career service and not a field for political patronage and communal rivalries.

Shu-jen Yang was in Berlin during those fateful years. 1930-34, when Hitler's evil star rose to the ascendant, His continental experience has given him a good inkling into the resurgence of power politics which led the world into the present catastrophe. But, as someone has said, all that we learn from history is that we never learn from history. I recalled the B.B.C. Brains Trust's discussion, to which we listened on our last evening with Turral, on Haldane's statement that 'Human history is but a brief and disreputable episode in the story of a cooling minor planet'. The women of the Brains Trust opposed this proposition vehemently. They could not bear to think that human history was 'brief' or 'an episode'; and as for it being disreputable, were we not seeing glowing acts of courage and heroism every day? Only one 'Brain' agreed with Haldane—Professor Joad. The earth, he said, had become habitable over 700 million years ago; and yet civilization, as we knew it, was only 3,000 years old. Our history was therefore brief; and it is not impossible that man, as a species, may be superseded in a few thousand, or million, years' time. And, as for human history being disreputable, man has always been engaged in slaughtering his fellow men, as indeed he is doing today. The Female Brains objected to this unpleasant remark; so did Gillett vehemently and Turral less emphatically. However, Turral diverted our attention from man's impending doom by referring to another problem which was discussed by the B.B.C. Brains Trust some time ago. The question was: How many salutes are fired when the Viceroy has a son? No one knew; but one of the members

of the Brains Trust said that he did not know how many salutes were fired when the Viceroy had a son, but when the wife of a Colonial Governor gave birth to a son, his A.D.C. was fired.

Lanchow, Wednesday, 6 December

Though Chia Yü Kuan was colder than Ansi, our plane behaved better. The engine started without much fuss and we left Chia Yü Kuan at about 11. At Chia Yü Kuan is the westernmost extremity of the Great Wall and here is the last of the Guard Houses planted about 100 B.C. From the air I strained my eyes to catch a glimpse of the Great Wall, but failed. Today, as yesterday, we flew over a milk-white sea of land with an occasional range of hills rising, now to our left and now to our right. We had been flying in a southern direction. The nearer we approached Lanchow, the thinner became the snow; and the hills around Lanchow were almost entirely free from it.

At Lanchow I was glad to meet the special Delegate for Foreign Affairs in Lanchow, Dr Lin Chi-han. Formerly Chief of the Protocol, he was the first to greet us on our arrival in Chungking in September 1943. He seems to be happy in his present post instead of being, to use his phrase, 'the door-keeper of the Waichiaopu'. In striped trousers and spats and black coat he conducted me, in grey flannel trousers and red raw-hide boots (for I had not troubled to take out my things from the plane as I am leaving Lanchow tomorrow) to pay official calls on the Governor, the Chief of the Military Staff and the Mayor. And then he entertained me to an excellent dinner. After dinner the Mayor asked me to a Chinese play, appropriately called 'The Retaking of Loyang'. But the retaking occurred not in the twentieth century A.D. but in the second century B.C.

Lanchow is beautifully situated on the Yellow River; and while approaching the town by air I got my first glimpse of this river which was the cradle of Chinese civilization. The Yellow River has been a great boon to China; it has also been a curse. This river, falling into the sea now to the north and now to the south of the Shantung peninsula, has, with its vagaries, its twists and turns, its devastating floods, and the constant shiftings of its course, caused so much misery that it is often called the 'River of Sorrows'. It is said that Emperor Yü, the founder of the Hsia dynasty which ruled over China from 2200 B.C., devoted his entire life to the task of bringing the Yellow River under control. His method was to prevent the recurrence of floods by clearing channels from the river. He dedicated himself to this task with such single-minded devotion that he took a vow not to enter his house until the work had been completed. Thrice he passed his house but refused to enter it, even though on one occasion he heard the cry of his new-born child—an example of kingly devotion to duty worthy of the hero of the *Ramayana*.

Even now the Yellow River continues to be a problem. The Government have appointed a Yellow River Commission to investigate the possibilities of irrigation and ways of developing the Yellow River region. I met one of the members of this Commission, Dr D. Y. Lin, formerly Professor of Forestry at the Nanking University. He impressed me greatly by his ability, earnestness and charm. If the other members of the Yellow River Commission are of the same calibre as Dr Lin, this Commission should produce a brilliant report (which most Commissions do) and excellent results (which not all Commissions produce). The President of the Commission is General Chao Sho-yuh. I do not know him, but I know of him. It was he who was entrusted with the unenviable task of escorting the late Tashi Lama's sacred body to Tibet—a body which lay somewhere near the Tibetan border for

months owing, in Chinese eyes, to Tibetan recalcitrance and, in Tibetan eyes, to Chinese intransigence.

Lanchow, Thursday, 7 December

My first impressions of Lanchow are distinctly favourable—so favourable that I have decided to stay on here for five days and catch the next plane to Chungking. Two missionary ladies who visited Lanchow a few years ago called it 'a maze of narrow gullies'. It is no longer a correct description. Mr Tsai, the Mayor, looks, and—I am assured—is, a most energetic young man. Under his direction streets are being widened and imposing buildings are springing up. They are all in the modern—or ultra-modern—style and are a glaring contrast to the graceful old structures still standing.

I am accommodated here in a hotel run by the Officers' Moral Endeavour Association; and I am told the room in which I am staying was the one occupied by Wendell Willkie. It has all modern conveniences—a spring bed, sofas and chairs, electric lights, a heater, long mirror and a separate telephone. If only there were a bathroom too!

We on the Malabar coast are almost viciously fond of baths. Even Marco Polo noticed it. 'And again I tell you', he wrote, 'that they [the people of Malabar] have such a custom that all, both men and women, wash themselves each day twice in water, their whole bodies, that is morning and evening.' And we have elaborated baths and oil baths as a fine art, even as the Chinese have elaborated cooking. John Barrymore, the film star, visited India a few years ago. He had been suffering from nerves and insomnia. Someone put him on to Shankunni Menon, an ayurvedic physician in Madras who used to be Anujee's Sanskrit teacher. John Barrymore was put through a course of oil baths and got over his ailments

completely. He asked the physician for his bill. Malabar physicians are not in the habit of submitting bills; they take whatever is given to them out of the patients' kindness, and that is often precious little. The utmost he expected from Barrymore was Rs. 100; and he nearly fainted when he got a cheque for Rs. 1,000.

At night the Governor, Ku Cheng-lin, entertained me to dinner. It was an excellent dinner; and among the delicacies were turtle, pigeons' eggs, stomach of fish from the Yellow River, Lily of the Valley pudding and pears for which Lanchow is famous. The Governor strikes one as kindly, unassuming, well-meaning and old-fashioned.

Today I had an unexpected caller whose card the manager of my hotel brought in. When I asked the manager who he was, he said in a whisper that he was somebody from the Police Bureau. The visitor came in, accompanied by someone who ingratiatingly introduced himself to me as one who knew 'the Indian language'. He said he was a Tibetan, had been in Darjeeling and spoke a few broken sentences in Hindustani. He asked me if I would write my name in the Indian language. When I did so in Arabic characters he turned to the other visitor and said in Chinese: 'Oh, he is a Muslim and not a Hindu'. I said my own mother-tongue was Malayalam. Then the Tibetan said in Chinese: 'Oh, he comes from Malaya and not from India.' On the whole, the principal visitor's suspicions about me were thoroughly roused. A little later, however, he saw on my table the Red Pass issued by the Waichiaopu to diplomats and looked through it. His attitude then changed; and he said he would send a few gendarmes to look after me. The secret police in all countries are often crude; and their methods are so transparent that sometimes I think Anujee's nephew was justified in asking her: 'Auntie, why don't they put on uniforms?'

Lanchow, Friday, 8 *December*

Today I had an experience which was new to me; I walked over a river. We had to cross the Yellow River to meet Mr Rawi Alley, the promoter of the Chinese Industrial Co-operatives. Half the river was frozen; and we walked right across it. It was exactly like walking on glass. In the other half, ice was still forming. Masses of ice were floating down the river, not in blocks, but in cumulative crystals. The Chinese have a lovely name for it, Liu Chu or flowing pearls. It was beautiful to watch these flowing pearls jostling against one another and making a rustling noise as they glided downstream. We crossed this part of the river on a sheepskin raft. The raft was made up of inflated goatskins, roped together, and was dexterously steered through chunks of floating ice. We sat precariously perched on the raft and were carried swiftly downstream. Sometimes these sheepskin rafts proceed for 30 days down the Yellow River as far as Peking. Occasionally they prove dangerous; and in 1927 Dr King, a missionary, was drowned while going in a raft. When I related my experience to Mr L. T. Chen, Commissioner of Finance, who treated us to an excellent dinner in the evening, he said we were far braver than himself. He dared not use these rafts; he preferred to cross the river by the bridge.

In the middle of the Yellow River there is an island called by a name which means 'the foreigner beckons'. The story goes that once a foreigner was going downstream on a sheepskin raft. When it got near the island the current was so swift that, terrified, he tried to jump from the raft on to the island but fell into the river. There he floated, beckoning for assistance, but no one could rescue him as the current was too strong, and he was caught up in a whirlpool and drowned.

I spent a busy day visiting various branches of the Chinese Industrial Co-operatives. Mr K. L. Chang,

Director of Co-operative Societies, very kindly took me round. He is a graduate of Yenching University and has thrown himself heart and soul into co-operative work. His wife too takes a keen interest in it and is in charge of 'the Bailie School'.

In the afternoon we crossed the river to the left bank in order to see 'the Bailie School'. Bailie is one of the best-remembered foreigners who have served China. He was Professor of Agriculture in the University of Nanking, but he was by no means a mere pedantic scientist like the one who turned China's foremost modern philosopher, Hu Shih, from the study of agriculture to philosophy. Hu Shih, I was told, was originally a student of agriculture, but when his Professor insisted that he should learn the names of 300 varieties of apples he abandoned agriculture and took to philosophy!

The Bailie Schools are intended to train rural technicians who, after completing their course, would take the scientific methods and ideals, which they have learnt, into their villages and set up co-operative industries. There are three such schools in Kansu—in Lanchow, Shantan and Shuang Shihpu. The Dean in charge of the school at Shantan is Mr Hogg, a nephew of Miss Lester with whom Mahatma Gandhi stayed when he went to London for the Round Table Conference. He has just published a book, *I See a New China.*

The body, mind and soul behind the whole movement is Rawi Alley, a New Zealander. He has them all—an untiring body, an alert mind and a magnanimous soul. And he has great personal charm. Rawi Alley was of great assistance to the Indian Medical Mission which worked in China for some years. I was touched by his tribute to Dr Kotnis who died in China. He was not only an able doctor, said Mr Alley, but saintly. He knew

the whole *Bhagavadgita* by heart and lived up to its precepts. Why do such men die young? asked Rawi Alley.

Rawi Alley is one of the few men I have met who have the gift of thinking things out on a grand scale and working them out to the minutest detail. And the problem of poverty in China and in India can only be solved by a combination of vision and hard work. It cannot be solved by industrialization alone in the Western sense of the word. Rawi Alley used to be Chief Inspector of Factories in Shanghai and in this capacity he could see its evils—the mad rush from village to town, the demoralization and the breakup of the village community. China and India are and will continue to be predominantly agricultural countries. What is needed is to bring to the villagers the amenities which townfolk enjoy and which the villagers can themselves create by simple, co-operative industrial effort. In this way industry will serve, and not dominate or enslave, the human spirit. In this way the benefits of town life and village life—a favourite subject for school essays in India—can be reconciled. In this way economic democracy will proceed side by side with political democracy; and without the former the latter is but a delusion and a sham. And in this way, and in this way only, could the third and perhaps the greatest of Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles, namely Livelihood, be achieved.

Lanchow, Saturday, 9 December

This afternoon we crossed the Yellow River again, not, as on the last occasion, by a sheepskin raft, but by a bridge, constructed in 1908, and visited the premises of the Fu Hsing Trading Company. It is a big concern which specially deals with wool and leather from Kansu and the neighbouring provinces. I saw stacks of wool which had come from Chinghai, Ninghsia and Suiyan; and

Mr Yuan, the Manchurian Vice-Director of the company, explained to my inappreciative, but not inattentive, self the differences between the various kinds of wool. He also showed me the wool-washing machines. The machines are operated by water from the Yellow River; but as the river is now frozen, they were not working.

Machinery leaves me cold. I was more interested in the view from the Fu Hsing Trading Company. By its side runs the Yellow River bearing 'flowing pearls' in its gently heaving bosom. Beyond it lay the main town of Lanchow, with its 160,000 souls. In front was the West Pagoda Hill pierced by a column at its summit and dotted by a few beautiful buildings. And all around us, on the horizon, were hills on which the setting sun made a play of colour. On these hills one could pick out, at more or less regular intervals, ancient watch towers which Mr Yuan had not even noticed—so immersed is he in wool. These, Mr Rawi Alley told me, used to serve in the Han period, two thousand years ago, as beacons to warn the kingdom of the approach of that dreaded enemy, the Huns.

On our way back, we went into a stately mosque which I was told was 400 years old. It had a typical Chinese curved roof, with dragons, tripods and crescent, and was supported on massive wooden pillars. All the wood, the Imam told me, came from Lanchow itself. Now, alas, there is not enough timber in Lanchow and its neighbourhood for a single one of these pillars. In China, as Fitzgerald has said in his *History of China*, the advance of man has been accompanied by the retreat of the trees. The result is soil erosion on an extensive scale. This problem is now receiving attention; Dr Lowdermilk, one of the foremost American experts on erosion, has suggested various remedies; and schemes of afforestation are in hand. But it is not as easy to create a forest as to destroy one.

Lanchow, Sunday, 10 *December*

Today we motored out to Hsing Lung Shan to see Genghis Khan's tomb. It was a memorable excursion. It would have been enjoyable even if Genghis Khan's tomb were not there; for Hsing Lung Shan is a beauty spot. At the end of a forty-mile drive from Lanchow we found ourselves in a lovely glen surrounded by hills standing like sentinels over Genghis Khan's tomb. It was as if Nature herself was guarding the remains of one of those human volcanoes which escape from her womb from time to time and cover the earth with the lava of their ambition.

The sanctity of Hsing Lung Shan, however, does not depend solely or even primarily on Genghis Khan's tomb. It was only four years ago that his remains were brought here. Until then they used to rest in the sacred Pailing temple in Inner Mongolia. The Japanese had been flirting with the Mongols as they had with the Manchus; and one of the Mongol Chiefs, Prince Teh, lent himself to their game. Thereupon the other Mongol princes who were loyal to the Chinese connexion requested the Chinese Government to move Genghis Khan's tomb into the interior of China lest it should become a rallying point for a puppet Mongol State. All Mongols believe that Genghis Khan will one day rise from his tomb and establish a universal empire; but not under Japanese auspices.

The Chinese could not have selected a more beautiful resting-place for the remains of Genghis Khan than Hsing Lung Shan. Here the hills are covered with forests. From Hsing Lung Shan the trees have not retreated. Nor have animals. We were told that the forests were the haunts of leopards and wild boar and that they often came down in the evening to pay obeisance to Genghis Khan.

Hsing Lung Shan is indeed a hallowed spot. The hillsides are dotted with ancient temples and monasteries.

One of these temples, situated on the dizzy heights of a hill, is appropriately called the Pillar to Heaven; and on the other side is a Cave of Mountain Gods. I was specially interested to note that Hsing Lung Shan was reminiscent of Li Po, the greatest of Chinese poets. Above Genghis Khan's tomb there is a spring bearing Li Po's name where men who wish to live long and women who wish to have children drink a glass of water, for the spring is conducive to fertility as well as longevity.

We walked up to Li Po's palace along a winding path, past the Jade Water Spring. We saw a tablet dedicated to Li Po who could cure diseases. We then passed over the Cloud Dragon Bridge, so called because a dragon is said to have risen from this spot and flown into the sky. Then we came within sight of Genghis Khan's tomb itself. It was guarded by Chinese sentries outside and Mongol monks inside. We walked up to his tomb, past an ancient bell and a couple of incense burners, and saw the silver coffin containing his remains. We were also shown the bow and arrow and the spear which he wielded. More gruesome than these was a banner on which was a large bundle of human hair. Genghis Khan used to pluck a hair from the head of every person he killed and hang it on to his banner; and there are said to be as many hairs on the banner as stars in the sky. Mongol lamas gave us some incense which we burnt before his tomb, reverently bowing.

Next to his coffin is another containing the remains of his wife. In front of that coffin is a mirror which was presented to her by the Spanish Government.

This man, before whose tomb the Secretary to the National Christian Council in China and myself burnt incense and bowed, was one of the greatest soldiers in history. In the second half of the twelfth century he founded an empire stretching from the Yellow Sea to the Black Sea. He invaded China in order to avenge his

father who had been nailed to a wooden cross in North China and died in agony. He conquered eastern Europe including Russia; Hungary was laid waste; and an imminent attack on the Holy Roman Empire was averted only because at that moment he received news of the death of his son, the Great Khan Ogtai. Otherwise all Europe might have felt the full force of Mongol invasion. In sheer ferocity of warfare, Genghis Khan has never been excelled; he laid down the rule that any city or town which loosed a single arrow in its defence should be refused all mercy; even if it surrendered, its inhabitants, combatants and non-combatants, should be butchered to the last man, woman and child. 'The greatest joy of one's life', said Genghis Khan, 'is to conquer one's enemies, to pursue them, to seize their property, to see their families in tears, to ride their horses and to possess their wives and daughters.'

We descended from Genghis Khan's tomb and entered the delightful guest house, maintained by the Officers' Moral Endeavour Association, with mingled thoughts on the sublimity and depravity of human nature, the heights of heroism and the depths of cruelty of which man was capable. We were, however, shaken out of these reflections by a notice on the wall containing the Ten Commandments of the O.M.E.A. They ran as follows:

1. DON'T BE GREEDY FOR WEALTH.
2. DON'T BE AFRAID TO DIE.
3. DON'T BE VAIN.
4. DON'T BE PROUD.
5. DON'T BE LAZY.
6. DON'T COMMIT ADULTERY.
7. DON'T SMOKE.
8. DON'T DRINK.
9. DON'T BORROW.
10. DON'T SPEAK FALSEHOOD.

I regret to say that then and there we violated two of these Commandments.

Lanchow, Monday, 11 *December*

Until yesterday I had associated Lanchow with bright sunshine and blue skies. Today, the weather suddenly changed; and it is snowing. Not the kind of continental snow which lay like a shroud over Urumchi and its environments but rather like the snow which falls in England just to keep up the old Christmas tradition. In a way I am glad that the weather has changed; for otherwise the transition from sunny Lanchow to fog-laden Chungking would have been too abrupt even for my hardened spirit to bear.

I lunched with Mr and Mrs K. L. Chang. The Changs are a charming couple. They are the life and soul of the Chinese Industrial Co-operatives in Lanchow. He is its Secretary; and she goes day after day on a sheepskin raft to the Co-operative School which is on the other side of the river and of which she is in charge. Moreover, she is a charming hostess; and I enjoyed their luncheon party more than any given to me in Lanchow. At this party I met a very interesting person, Mr Pei Chien-tsun. Tall and handsome, he came in with a rosary in his hand; and one straightaway felt one was in the presence of a distinguished personage. The rosary indicated that he was a Buddhist; but he has not renounced the world, for he is the President of the local People's Political Council. He is also a painter of note; and his paintings of horses are particularly famous. He presented one of his horses to Vice-President Wallace who visited China last summer. This Buddhist and painter was also a General. He used to teach strategy in a Military Academy near Peking; and a number of famous Generals like Pai Chung-hsi, Vice-Chief of the General Staff, have passed through his hands. Besides, he is a delightful raconteur and kept the table in roars of laughter. He was most interested to hear of my trip, especially as my itinerary coincided in many places with that of Hsuan Tsang with which he

was well acquainted. We talked about Buddhism, and of how Buddhist scriptures were brought into China on a white horse in the first century B C., giving its name to the White Horse Monastery in Loyang. I felt highly honoured when Mr Pei Chien-tsun offered to paint a white horse and present it to me as a token of his appreciation of my journey in the footsteps of ancient Chinese pilgrims.

Another interesting person I met was Mr Hunter of the China Inland Mission. He has spent 50 years in China of which 30 years were passed in Sinkiang; and he has not been to his home in Scotland for 44 years. He is 82 years old and yet is physically and mentally agile. He knows a number of languages including Turki and Mongol and is at present engaged in compiling a Russian hymn book. He told me the distressing news of Sir Eric Teichman's death. At the age of 54 and in midwinter, Sir Eric performed in a reverse direction the journey which I am now completing.

Chungking, Tuesday, 12 December

I am just back in Chungking. I am now experiencing something of—a thousandth, a millionth part of—that feeling of satisfaction, of elation almost, which Fa-hsien and Hsuan Tsang had on their return to China. 'When I look back on what I have gone through,' wrote Fa-hsien in moving language, 'my heart is involuntarily moved and perspiration flows forth. That I encountered danger and trod the most perilous places without sparing or thinking of myself was because I had a definite aim and thought of nothing but to do my duty in all simplicity and straightforwardness.' Hsuan Tsang summed up his experiences as follows: 'I traversed', he said, in a memorial which he submitted to the Emperor in justification of the long journey he had undertaken without the Emperor's

permission, ' vast plains of shifting sand, scaled precipitous mountain-crags clad with snow, found my way through the scarped passes of the iron gates, passed along by the tumultuous waves of the hot sea.... Thus I have accomplished a journey of more than 50,000 li; yet, notwithstanding the thousand differences of customs and manners I have witnessed, the myriads of dangers I have encountered, by the goodness of Heaven I have returned without accident and now offer my homage with a body unimpaired, and a mind satisfied with the accomplishment of my vows. I have beheld the Gridhakuta mountain, worshipped at the Bodhi tree: I have seen traces not seen before, heard sacred words not heard before and witnessed spiritual prodigies, exceeding all the wonders of Nature.'

Compared to the tremendous journeys of Fa-hsien and Hsuan Tsang mine was but a holiday excursion. Still I feel happy that I have been able to accomplish it.

We left Lanchow at noon in brilliant sunshine. The farther we moved from Lanchow, however, the more opaque became the atmosphere and the denser the fogs; and while approaching Chungking we passed, as we expected, through an atmosphere of rolling clouds. We could see nothing. I therefore closed my eyes and thought of all that I had seen during the last four months. I knew that once I arrived in Chungking I should get little time to indulge even in the luxury of recapitulation. I therefore let my memory roam at will over the incidents of this trip. A procession of images passed through my mind—that tranquil morning in the Wular Lake reflecting a rainbow; hill upon hill at first covered with pine forests and afterwards with artemisia; the long and dreary march from Astor through the purgatory of Mushkin to Bunji where, by way of compensation, I obtained a glorious view of Nanga Parbat; Gilgit and Cobb's polo-grounds, Galbraith's grave and Jackson's hospitality; those fearful parris over the Karakorams; the Batura glacier which we

M. C Gillett

G. R. Turral, Sir Eric Teichman and O. E. Clubb at the American Consulate, Urumchi, in September 1943

M. C. Gillett

G R. Turral (sitting) and O. E Clubb

Rawi Alley (left), Dr D. Y Lin (right) and the Author
(*see p.* 235)

Dr D. Y. Lin, the Author and the President of the Co-operative Societies (*see p* 236)

crossed on a yak and the Passu glacier which carried away the horse of one of our fellow travellers; the 800-year-old castle of the Mir of Hunza commanding a magnificent view of Mount Rakhaposhi; the snowy crossing over the Mintaka Pass into China; the long and lovely rides on the Roof of the World; the four days in Tashkurghan with an agonizing backache; the weird gorge of Toilebulung with its winding stream which we crossed and re-crossed two dozen times and in which Hsuan Tsang's precious Indian elephant was drowned; my first glimpse of the majesty of the desert—and of Gillett—at Ighiz Yar; the long desert drives, suffocating us with dust; the lovely oases producing the most delicious melons, pears, peaches, grapes and pomegranates; Turki girls dancing with their jaunty little embroidered caps and Yang Kuei-fei, the Cleopatra of China, reeling on the stage with drink, jealousy and passion; hundreds of Indians dispossessed of their lands; the beautiful glimpse of the Heavenly Mountains from the roof of Chini Bagh; the scholarly charm of the Governor, Wu Chung-hsin and the striking face of General Chu Shao-liang compounded of strength and sweetness; the hectic parties at the Russian Consulates in Kashgar and Urumchi and in the yamen at Khotan where Gillett and I exceeded the limit prescribed by Confucius; the gracious, Ajanta-like frescoes of Qizil and Kuchar; Genghis Khan's tomb guarded by Chinese soldiers and Mongol lamas; a world clothed in snow—and, now, a city shrouded in fog!

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